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In this issue

FOREWORD

In Central and Eastern Europe the year 2014 was dominated by the Ukrainian events. The Russian annexation of Ukraine's Crimea in March had not only changed the region's legal status but also seriously confronted the fundamental principles and norms of international law. The region of Central and Eastern Europe is often viewed through its geographic location between the European Union and Russia, and perceived as an object of geopolitical competition among these two "centers of gravity in Europe". After the annexation of Ukraine's Crimea, Belarus remains the only Eastern Partnership (EaP) country free from any kind of conflict related to ethnic or territorial issues. Belarus' relations with the EU and participation in the Eurasian Union are featured in this issue of the Belarusian Review. Another topic we focus on in this issue is the 2015 presidential election in Belarus. Although their results may seem predictable, the elections will be held in somewhat different geopolitical environment. With this regard, the political and economic rhetoric determined by the current geopolitical configurations in the region require closer attention and thorough assessments.

The Ukrainian events and their outcomes raised the issue of accuracy of the assessments of the developments in our region. On the one hand, there are many similarities between the EaP countries due to their common Soviet-formed political culture which makes it easier for them to understand each other's needs and problems. On the other hand, differences between the EaP countries are significant enough for not drawing analogies between them. The need for balancing between these two factors seems to be a precondition for any commentator dealing with Belarus.

The status of a little-known nation rather enhances a cliché-ridden image Belarus, particularly when some visible elements of its distinctiveness are for different reasons omitted. It is not uncommon that many experts and journalists continue to use Russian language transliteration of personal and geographic Belarusian names. Some of them argue that they can choose between Belarusian and Russian, some believe that Russian is the main language of communication in Belarus, some think that these variants are allegedly more familiar for western readers, and others simply rely on the number of Google search results by Google. This approach does not contribute to real understanding of Belarus and its peculiarities, even though in some cases the authors try to do their best to familiarize a wider scope of readers with Belarus-related issues.

As Ivonka Survilla observes, in some cases it is combined with the use of "biased Russian sources to integrate Belarus into the so-called "Russosphere" and justify this integration by alleged "cultural preconditions". Hence, it is the Belarusian forms of geographic and personal names in the Belarus--related texts that are visible manifestations of the nation's cultural distinctiveness.

EDITORIAL

END OF AN ERA IN 2015?

WALTER STANKIEVICH

The next presidential election in Belarus has been scheduled to take place in November 2015, but the date can be changed. The current President Aliaksandr Lukashenka was first elected in 1994, and has continued to stay in power for the past 20 years with all subsequent elections and referenda being neither free nor fair, as judged by independent international observers.



April 11, 1995: Nineteen Belarusian MPs protest against the referendum initiated by Lukashenka

The first referendum held in 1995 gave the president substantial new powers, brought back the Soviet era flag and symbols, and established the Russian language as a second official language in the country, (in practice, Russian became the dominant language in official use, and throughout the educational system).

The second referendum held in 1996 re-introduced authoritarian rule of the Soviet type with a hand-picked parliament and a subservient judiciary at all levels. Executive authority from the top down to the lowest local level was by appointment.

The economy remained of the Soviet type with collective farms in place and with factories and other major enterprises continuing to be state-run. It suffered gradual but continuous inflation and currency devaluation. It was kept afloat by cheap Russian oil and gas, cheap credit and outright donations in return for maintaining a pro-Russian foreign policy line. Major support by Russia was balanced to a lesser degree by loans from IMF and other western financial institutions. The promised free market reforms failed to materialize, other freedoms as well.

The third referendum, again grossly fraudulent and un-

-Constitutional, held in 2004, changed the Constitution by allowing the president to exceed the two-term limit without any limitation. By means of fraudulently efficient vote counts, it practically guaranteed a lifelong one-man rule to Lukashenka.

Such is the political and economic picture of the past 20 years in Belarus in advance of another Presidential election. Is it reasonable for the population to hope for change for the better in 2015?

The Presidential elections in March of 2006 and December of 2010 were again neither free nor fair, with the re-elected President claiming victories of over 80% in his favor. In 2006, thousands of predominantly young protesters, inspired by the earlier successful Orange Revolution in Ukraine, set up tent camp in the center of Minsk. Despite considerable popular support, the bitter wintry conditions prevented the protest from expanding, and after a few weeks, massive police action liquidated the tent camp, arresting hundreds of young protesters, and imprisoning one of the opposition candidates for a number of years for leading a march, demanding their release.

In the course of the next four years, responding to sharp Western criticism, Belarusian authorities in order to receive financial aid from the West, made promises of economic reforms, improved human rights' conditions. The freer atmosphere gave hope to the population, and the 2010 presidential election attracted nine candidates beside Lukashenka. The campaign was relatively free, and the prevailing popular hope was that Lukashenka will face a run-off, despite the usual violations in casting and counting of votes.

Alas, within minutes of the polls closing, the state media announced that he won another 80% victory. Crowds of disappointed protesters started gathering in Minsk, with tens of thousands ending up in the main city square despite freezing night temperatures. Some of the major candidates were there addressing the crowd, calling for a run-off. Hope was in the air. But so were thousands of state militia and special troops waiting in the government buildings and nearby side streets. Following a staged provocation, they swung into action, attacking the unarmed peaceful crowd. At the end of the night 700 protesters, including a number of opposing candidates, were forcibly loaded into police buses and trucks and dispersed among the city jails. The next months were devoted to speedy trials with short term detention for most, and long terms meted out to the major candidates " for instigating a riot", with others placed under house arrest. Two of the imprisoned candidates appealed for clemency after being tortured, and upon release, fled the country.

Will anything be different this time? Can it be better, or will it be even worse?

Some potential candidates have fled the country, others are still in jail, or ineligible to take part in the election. Will one of the familiar candidates generate sufficient popular enthusiasm? Or will a knight on a white horse ride to the rescue of the country, convincing the population that they have a chance for a better life in a genuine democracy with free enterprise?

Will the former Soviet type central planners suddenly become honest free market champions? Will the obedient and self-serving officials act for the benefit of the country, or continue to enrich themselves? Will the promises made to the world's financial institutions be kept?

Since the most likely answer to the preceding questions is a NO, a search for an inspired solution needs to begin.

Any financial support from the West cannot be based on promises of reforms that again will not be fulfilled. Meaningful support should be given based on actual performance, initiated by reform oriented specialists, who would be guaranteed a free hand and requisite authority.

Failing this, Russia would remain as the only potential source of financial support. With increasing impact of Western sanctions on Russia's economy, such support is less likely. If given, it may drastically limit the regime‘s freedom of action and may result in loss of sovereignty for Belarus.

With no aid from Russia, Belarusian regime may be willing to accept Western economic support with political strings attached. The elections and the preceding campaign should be genuinely free and fair, with access to state media available, and freedom of assembly guaranteed. The polls and early voting should take place with adequate international supervision. All political prisoners should be freed and rehabilitated, with those forced to flee the country allowed to take part in the election with their safety assured. As a strategy, rather than selecting a single compromise candidate ahead of the campaign, the democratic candidates should campaign as a team, with the best performing candidate remaining in the race, and the others withdrawing. Upon electoral victory, the leading team members would be offered responsible positions. Such a strategy can convince the population that the team is not only capable of winning the election, but is also capable of governing the country and earning the trust of the world's democracies.

BECOME AN AUTHOR

We are looking forward to receive contributions from new authors, particularly from young scholars and analysts dealing with issues related to Belarus. If you would like to submit your text to the Belarusian Review please, email it to the address: thepointjournal@gmail.com or belarusianreview@hotmail.com. All the materials must be sent in a text format (.doc, .docx, .rtf). bear author‘s name and should not exceed 7,000 words. Please note that the Belarusian Review is an entirely non-commercial project operating on a voluntary basis.

FEATURES

IVONKA SURVILLA: BELARUS HAS BEEN AFFECTED BY A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THIS COUNTRY



Belarus is often perceived as a part of the so-called "Russosphere" which is explained by the alleged "cultural preconditions". The Belarusian Review *has asked* Ivonka Survilla*, the President of the BNR Rada, whether this view contributes to understanding of Belarus.*

Ivonka Survilla: "It is difficult to make a blanket statement about what people may know. It seems however easier to identify what is not known. Whether because of personal experience, education, the lack of access to global press, or even the lack of reporting, one can say that Belarus and, as a result, policies in relation to Belarus, have been severely affected by a lack of knowledge about this country. It seems a conceptual eclipse about its existence and that of other European nations is the norm, especially in the shadow cast by the generalized and often incorrect perceptions of a "Russosphere."

Most ordinary people in North-America as well as in other parts of the world would probably mention Russia if asked what countries in Eastern Europe they might know. But even those who have heard about the Baltic States, Poland and Ukraine – the latter being exceptionally well represented among the diasporas of the free world – most likely know little about Belarus. In fact they have probably never heard of Belarus except in catastrophic contexts, such as the 1986 Chernobyl disaster or, the political challenges generated by "the last dictatorship in Europe." Belarusians living in the free world are aware of this conceptual void and have dedicated much energy to highlighting Belarus for the mainstream public, as well as for those equipped to make grant and policy decisions that affect civil society programs and initiatives for Belarusians.

Historically, the main reason for this lack of knowledge about Belarus was the deliberate colonial policy of the Russian empire, which, since the occupation of Belarus by Catherine II, systematically tried to deny the very existence of this distinct ten-century-old nation. Colonial strategies are well recognized, as is the power of exclusion. It was here that Belarus began its overshadowed existence, and remains to this day the "best kept secret of Europe". Belarus was appropriated through the manipulation of terminology and its very name (labeled the North Western territories), of its language (Belarusian being considered as a dialect of Russian), of its educational and religious institutions and of its right to explore and perform its heritage. The Soviet regime, which was obliged to create a "Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic" after it invaded the newly established Belarusian independent state - the Belarusian Democratic Republic - in 1918, continued these colonial policies until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. One should also recognize that the world of intellectual production played a strategic role in the colonial process, whereby pro-Soviet and pro-Russian constructions of history and of political processes could systematically eliminate a national presence by skewing facts, offering lies as truth, and by manipulating the tone of academic language used to undermine a "subordinate" culture (here, Belarus) compared to that of the Empire builders (Russia).

Thus, it seems normal that most ordinary people know very little about Belarus. What is not normal however is that some self-proclaimed experts on Belarus, who should know better, use biased Russian sources to integrate Belarus into the so-called "Russosphere" and justify this integration by alleged "cultural preconditions".

This not only interferes with the efforts of our people to preserve their independence at the time of an exacerbated Russian expansionism, but endeavors to convince those who are ready to help us to protect our land from foreign aggression, that Belarusians have no desire to be free and sovereign."

THE EU AND BELARUS: DEMOCRACY PROMOTION BY TECHNOCRATIC MEANS?

ELENA A. KOROSTELEVA

Is Belarus an unwavering constant in international relations: a maverick, isolated from the West, and increasingly entangled into the Russian – now Eurasian – sphere of influence? Indeed, on the surface, there seems to be business-as-usual: Lukashenka's regime remains unchallenged customarily depicted as 'the last dictatorship in Europe'.[1] Belarus' relations with the international community and the EU especially, have shown little sign of change since the mid-1990s, and at best could be described as spasmodic. All official attempts so far – from PCA in 1995, the ENP/EaP in 2004/9, to a Joint Interim Plan in 2010, and a Dialogue on Modernisation in 2012 – have either been thwarted or simply had no effect. Meanwhile, Belarus' relations with its eastern neighbours continue apace, though more through compulsion than by free will. By 2010 Belarus became part of the ECU,[2] and by May 2014 it jointly signed an EEU launch agreement.[3]

So, as it seems, Belarus' domestic and international relations remain emphatically stagnant reflecting a predictable status-quo, or do *they*?

Two critical disjunctures challenge a seemingly enduring order. The first refers to government quiet but persistent discourse of resistance to Russia's overbearing influence, manifested in sabotaging its ECU membership, petty wars over trade/economic issues,[4] and more tellingly, in publicly endorsing Poroshenko's leadership and objecting to Russia's demands of extending economic and political embargo to Ukraine.[5]

The second disjuncture is by far more emblematic of the existing undercurrents, exposing profound longitudinal changes in public opinion and behaviour.[6] As our research indicates, the last five years have observed:

- a significant rise in public interest, cognizance and affinity with the EU;
- a growing sense of clarity and recognition of EU competencies in specific areas, and their mapping against the needs and interests of the population;
- most essentially, a new sense of identity premised on a more critical evaluation of the Self and of the government, and legitimation of European standards. To this end, relations with Russia (and ECU) are no longer seen as a default option for Belarus; and a new identity – 'We are Europeans' – endures as a narrative hitherto absent from the public discourse.

This indicates an ongoing process of socialisation into a wider European space, and even suggests that the EU, despite a limited official dialogue, might have been doing something right, to succeed in expanding the boundaries of public learning. Hence, what has the EU been doing *unnoticed*, and how does it matter for democracy promotion?

THE EU APPROACH TO DATE

The EU had initially struggled to secure allegiance from the partner countries in the east, and Belarus in particular.[7] In 2011, however, the Commission substantively revisited its approach which marked a turning point in EU engagement. Three particular aspects are worth noting.

Firstly, the new measures have become *more versatile,* expanding the panoply of instruments, programmes and actors. For Belarus it amounted to almost €60 million in the ENPI support for 2012-13 alone (a six-fold increase from 2007-11). Secondly, the new approach became *more inclusive* targeting all levels of society. In Belarus, there are currently 59 ongoing projects, with over 150 successfully completed in the past ten years and many continued on the EC assessment.[8] Most successful initiatives are at the local and regional levels, e.g. BELMED, RELOAD-2, CBC and CIB. Thirdly, and most importantly, the EU approach has become more *technocratic*, sector-driven, and low-key, enabling norms' codification and their inculcation into the daily practices of Belarusian people. How does this matter, and what of democracy?

DEMOCRACY BY TECHNOCRACY?

Recently, several scholars[9] have observed critical shifts towards more 'functional' and 'institutionalised' engagement of the EU with autocratic regimes in the Middle East and North Africa, and in the eastern region, with Belarus and Azerbaijan in particular. This development, as Bosse argues in particular, 'is potentially serious, as it appears to mark the beginning of the end of the EU's ambition to act as a successful democratizer in its immediate neighbourhood, and perhaps even the end of the democratizing paradigm in the EU's foreign policies more generally'.[10] More broadly, there has been rising scholarly criticism concerning the EU's increasingly technocratic approach, questioning the EU's credibility as a 'force for good' and its '*de facto* acceptance … of the limits of Union's role as a "successful democratizer"'.[11] These potentially serious concerns over the EU's undermining its own creed, when 'partnering with dictatorships', raise equally serious questions. First, if the current EU policies towards modern autocracies are not working or effective, as many recent cases come to observe, should the EU then withdraw from further engagement with a country-in-question, in order to avoid unpleasant compromises and to save its integrity? Surely, a formal recognition of its defeat over securing some legitimation in a country, would be even a greater *de facto* blow to the EU credibility as a global democracy promoter? Conversely, if the EU policies are not delivering in a particular case, would it not be more expedient to diversify and offer more tailored, non-linear and even inclusive, if necessary, an approach in order to solicit more interest and understanding of its intentions? As the analysis here demonstrates the EU's changing *modus operandi* to that of low--key and more technocratic engagement, which has extended to the all levels of society, and been interest/sector-driven, has yielded a sea-change transformation in public acceptance of the EU as an equally important player in the eastern region (in conjunction with Russia), and in behavioural patterns displaying more self-awareness and critical reasoning. So, is it, on the

EU part, recognition of defeat, or rather a differentiated tactic to make democracy promotion work; and how does it matter?

The EU non-linear technocratic approach, counter-intuitively, and in the absence of political dialogue, seems to have induced public socialisation and recognition of the EU as an alternative to Russia, partner. As changing patterns of public behaviour suggest, this may well be due the EU's continued effort to expose Belarus to the international norms as well as ongoing social empowerment at grass-root levels.

First, despite the limited official dialogue, the EU succeeded to engage, not through high politics, but rather via sector-cooperation under the CIB, CBC, and other small-scale projects, which now render new language of norms and practices, and in some cases, even structures. But the instances of joint ventures are still scares. For example, it is politically short-sighted to exclude Belarus' participation from the EURONEST, the value of which, as Petrova and Raube argue,[12] is about emulating EU practices of good governance. There is also little incentivisation occurring to integrate Belarus in the WTO community, now that it is part of the ECU. As Jahn argues, 'practitioners of democracy promotion "should care at least as much about the WTO" as they do about the impact of assistance for elections or support for civil society'.[13]

Second, if 'the international' matters for codifying people-to-people contacts, and socialising them into the practices of 'good governance', and not as spasmodic occasions but rather as a continuing effort; 'social empowerment' is another dimension that ensures translation of 'codes' into daily behaviours of individuals. As Chandler[14] argues, democracy-building is less about high politics, but more about the relevance of 'problems' to people's daily lives: e.g. when households malfunction, citizens should know how to collectively resolve the problem, and consequently be in charge and less tolerant of existing inadequacies in their daily lives. This is where de-politicisation of democracy is truly vital. Gradual change observed in public attitudes and behavioural patterns in Belarus attests to the merits of the-above approach and renders some useful insights into how low-level pragmatic engagement with various local stakeholders may alter public understanding of politics, and of the workings of democracy.

These changes may seem insignificant at a glance. At the same time, for those who believe in inculcation of values through continued reciprocation and joint practices, and those who stakes on public resilience and social empowerment, these changes would undoubtedly become most important signifies of synergies that finally begin to sow. The outcomes posit a new turn in democracy promotion politics – long-term, and technocratic – that is, building democracy by *other* means and via continuing exposure to the international norms and regulations, and their inculcation not necessarily into the grand stately structures, but rather, into small but meaningful lives of individuals.

NOTES:

[1] Wilson, Andrew. *Belarus: the Last European Dictatorhsip.* Yale University Press, 2011; Bennett, Brian. *The Last Dictatorship in Europe: Belarus under Lukashenko*. London: Hurst, 2011

[2] Dragneva, Rilka and Wolczuk, Kataryna. *Russia, the Eurasian Customs Union and the EU: Cooperation, Stagnation or Rivalry?* Briefing Paper, 2012/01, London: Chatham House, 2012 (5)

[3] RT, 29 May 2014: http://rt.com/business/162200-russia--bealrus-kazakhstan-union/

[4] Korosteleva, Elena. 'Belarusian Foreign Policy in a Time of Crisis', *Journal of Communist Politics and Transition Studies*, 27(2011): 566-87

[5] Vedomosti, 30 June 2014: http://www.vedomosti.ru/newsline/news/28324261/ukraina-radelila-tamozhennyj-soyuz.

[6] The 2009 survey was funded by the ESRC (RES-061-25-0001) as part of a large project 'Europeanising or securitising the outsiders: assessing the EU's partnership-building approach with Eastern Europe': http://www.aber.ac.uk/en/interpol/research/research-projects/europeanising-securitising-outsiders/researchfindings/. A similar survey was applied in June 2013, with the support of the Office for a Democratic Belarus (ODB). The survey included 1000 respondents, and stratified, random and representative of the Belarusian population aged 18+ (urban and rural) by nationality, sex, religion, age and education. See http://www.kent.ac.uk/politics/gec/research/documents/gec-belarus-survey-brief-2013.pdf.

[7] Delcour, Laure. 'The Institutional Functioning of the Eastern Partnership: an Early Assessment'. *Eastern Partnership Review*, No.1. Tallinn: Estonian Centre of Eastern Partnership, 2011; Korosteleva, Elena. *The European Union and its Eastern Neighbours: Towards a More Ambitious Partnership?* London: Routledge, 2012.

[8] EuropeAid Activities in Belarus: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/belarus/documents/eu_activities_in_belarus.pdf.

[9] Joffé, George. 'The European Union, Democracy and Counter-Terrorism in the Maghreb', *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 46 (2008): 147–171; Youngs, Richard. 'European Approaches to Democracy Assistance: Learning the Right Lessons?' *Third World Quarterly*, 24:1 (2003): 127-138; Pace, Michelle. 'Paradoxes and contradictions in EU democracy promotion in the Mediterranean: the limits of EU normative power', *Democratization*,16:1 (2009): 39-58; Bosse, Giselle. 'A Partnership with Dictatorship: Explaining the Paradigm Shift in European Union Policy towards Belarus'. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 50 (2012): 367–384.

[10] Bosse 2012, 367

[11] Ibid, 380

[12] Petrova, I., and Raube, K. 'The EaP, EuroNest and the Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation in the EU Neighbourhood', paper presented at the UACES conference, 1-3 September 2014

[13] Jahn, Beate. 'Rethinking Democracy Promotion', *Review of International Studies*, 38(2012): 685-705 (703)

[14] Chandler, David. 'Democracy Unbound? Non-linear Politics and the Politicization of Everyday Life', *European Journal of Social Theory*, 17 (2014):42-59

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BELARUS – EU RELATIONS: AD HOC ACTIONS VS. PRE-DEVELOPED STRATEGY

KIRYL KASCIAN

INTRODUCTION

Within the EU perspective as demonstrated by Lithuania's EU Presidency Programme, Belarus remains an outsider of the EaP. Thus, the current status quo in the Belarus-EU relations seems to be a foregone conclusion for both parties involved. Moreover, in case of any political changes in Belarus, the EU seems to lack any pre-developed strategy focused on this country. Furthermore, since the EaP itself never became a priority of the EU foreign policy, it is unlikely that the EU could effectively react and comprehensively support any apparent changes in Belarus and thus prove its status of an important player in the EaP region.

Hence, the current configuration of the EaP measured by a given partner country's stance towards the Association Agreements with the EU provides that the EaP is mainly focused not on outsiders in order to attract them with the EU policy mechanisms provided by the EaP, but merely to further engage the leaders of the initiative. Thus, since the implementation of the EaP, Belarus-EU bilateral relations could be characterized as ad hoc actions that were at best planned for a short term.

GEOPOLITICAL BACKGROUND

Today's Belarus is often viewed through its geographic location between the European Union and Russia, and perceived as an object of geopolitical competition among these two "centers of gravity in Europe". Moreover, both the country's Soviet legacy and the nature of its domestic political system are presented as important elements of this approach as they allegedly provide explanations for the country's alliances. The former is explained through the prism of wide usage of the Russian language and the alleged "backward[ness] in terms of national and civic identity". The latter is embodied in the formula "Belarus, the Europe's last dictatorship" and is firmly attached to the personality of the country's president Aliaksandr Lukashenka. Among all the states of the EU Eastern neighborhood, Belarus is characterized by the lowest level of engagement with EU and the highest degree of integration with Russia, particularly after the signing of the Treaty on Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) on 29 May 2014. However, this pro-Russian alliance choice of Belarus (Customs Union, EEU, CSTO, etc.) is rather a result of the country's rational economic interests which Belarus coherently pursues and not of abstract "cultural preconditions" mentioned by some commentators. Moreover, after the annexation of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula by Russia in March 2014, Belarus remains the only Eastern Partnership country free from any kind of conflict related to ethnic or territorial issues.

BELARUS-EU RELATIONS FORMAT

While addressing the format of Belarus-EU relations, there are two aspects which should be distinguished. The first one refers to the formal framework of this relationship, i.e. its actual platforms and rules. The second deals with the political context of the bilateral ties and merely reflects the dynamic nature of international relations. Both aspects are interrelated, but the political aspect is subordinated to the formal one, i.e. regardless of the nature of their political regimes the EaP countries are subjects of the same policies framework.

The formal aspect of the Belarus-EU relations is linked with Belarus' participation in the Eastern Partnership track of the ENP. This policy is based on the more-for-more principle which implies that "the EU will develop stronger partnerships and offer greater incentives to countries that make more progress towards democratic reform." Furthermore, each EaP country's rapprochement with the EU is measured through the prism of the respective Association Agreements (AA) designed to replace Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA). These Association Agreements as viewed by the EU are to provide a detailed framework and guidelines for the significant range of political, economic, and social reforms in each country of the EU eastern neighbourhood. The Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) part of these agreements is of particular importance since it can be negotiated only under the precondition of the WTO membership of the contracting party.

Thus, such formal framework of the Belarus-EU relations implies a number of general aspects. First, the very format is designed by the EU and is mesuared accordingly. In other words, it is the EU that sets the framework for bilateral cooperation. At the same time, this framework never contained any clear reference to the perspective of EU membership of any EaP country, though for instance the EU-Moldova AA in its preamble refers to Moldova as "a European country." However, this formulation does not contain a direct reference to Art. 49 TEU which stipulates that any European country may apply to become an EU Member State.

Secondly, the progress of these bilateral relations is "measured through their progress towards the Association Agreements with the EU and compliance with the formula "deeper integration – higher conditionality." On the one hand, in practice such an approach "resembles a two-tier league where the "champions" who [on the eve of the Vilnius EaP Summit] were about to initiate or sign the association agreement are delegated to the higher tier, while those lacking it – to the second tier." On the other hand, being "the EU's attempt to consolidate its individual members' alignment with the post-Soviet space and mould it into a multilateral framework", this "multilaterally designed framework was reduced to a set of bilateral alignments undermining the effectiveness of the EaP from the very outset."

Thirdly, the initiation of the Association Agreements is

conditioned upon each EaP country's non-participation in the Russian-led integration projects in the post-Soviet space. This implies that the EU-led Eastern Partnership and the Russian-driven Eurasian Economic Union are sometimes viewed as competing integration projects. However, contrary to the full-fledged membership perspective in the Customs Union, the final benefits of the integration under the EaP track are still unclear which significantly complicates what is referred to as "a European perspective to the region." This complies with the fact that the EaP had never become a clearly-defined priority for the EU politics since the initiative was fostered by those countries whose geopolitical interests lay with the EaP area whereas the EU countries with different strategic priorities were not willing to equally contribute to the EaP development.

With regard to Belarus, the formal framework contains a number of country-specific aspects. First, being involved in the EaP, Belarus takes part only in its multilateral track. Second, Belarusian adherence to international alliances has a pivotal role for assessing the country's perspectives within the EaP formal framework. Of particular importance here is Belarus' membership in the Russian-led Customs Union and observer status in the WTO. This setting of Belarus' alliances does not comply with the aforementioned conditionality set for opening negotiations on the preparation of the Association Agreement and its DCFTA part. Thus, within the EU perspective Belarus is an outsider even in the Eastern Partnership's "second tier."

Belarus' outsider status in the EaP is closely linked with the political context of the country's bilateral relations with the EU, and notably with the nature of its political regime commonly known as "Europe's last dictatorship."

THE CONSEQUENCES OF *AD HOC* POLICIES

The format of Belarus-EU relations has proven its inefficiency. The first reason for this inefficiency is the incompatibility of formats. The current EaP framework is centered on the comprehensive Association Agreements, which implies not a partnership but merely an integration option without clearly indicated EU membership perspectives for the EaP countries. However, it fails to consider the current reality of the existing political alliances of the EaP member states. In other words, the countries are indirectly asked to make an "either-or" choice between the EaP and the Russian-led Customs Union/EEU option.

Hence, this framework is not compatible with the approach of the authorities of Belarus, who strive for an equitable partnership option instead of the integration with the EU. Furthermore, it does not fit the political course of the Belarusian authorities which prioritizes its "strategic partnership" with Russia but does emphasize the high-priority importance of cooperation with the EU.

The second reason is the difference of approaches based on the political factor. While the EU applies a value-based framework in its critical engagement policies towards Belarus, the Belarusian authorities prefer a *Realpolitik* approach which implies a de-politicization of the bilateral relations with the EU. The renunciation of this approach by either side would merely mean a moral loss for the party which would accept the other's approach. However, it seems that both Belarus and the EU have apparently become used to the current status quo in their bilateral relations, which does not contribute to the maintenance of a long-term strategy of Belarus-EU relations.

Thus, the current format of the Belarus-EU relations within the EaP framework seems quite irrelevant for the essence of these relations. In other words, from a pragmatic point of view, the EaP multilateral framework has a rather symbolic meaning both for the EU and Belarus. For the EU it is important to keep Belarus on this multilateral track, whereas for Belarus it is important to be at least formally engaged with the EU. At the same time, the pursuance of the Belarus-EU relations on a purely bilateral track would enable the parties to find some room for at least a mid-term cooperation without morally losing face by accepting the other party's stance, and take into account the peculiarities of Belarus' political alliances.

Editor's note:

This text was prepared for and presented at the conference '*Europe's Near Abroad: Building an understanding of the changing Eastern Neighbourhood*' (University of Kent, Canterbury, June 30, 2014). The conference was organized by the Global Europe Centre and the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Kent. The full version of this text has appeared as BR Working Paper #2. It can be downloaded from our website in PDF format. We would appreciate feedbacks and comments from our readers. Belarusian Review and The_Point Journal are open to new ideas and cooperation with new authors.

QUOTES

Belarusian-European relations are one of the most important priorities of the Belarusian foreign policy. Normalization of relations with the European Union is the natural desire of Belarus, as a European state, to live in harmony with its neighbor, to use cooperation opportunities for promoting the modernization of the country, increasing economic competitiveness and ensuring security and well-being of citizens.

Belarus' Foreign Ministry

October 31, BelTA

We are still convinced in the need of constructive cooperation between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union for the sake of establishing a common economic and humanitarian space from Vladivostok to Lisbon

Uladzimir Makei (Belarus' Foreign Minister)

November 18, BelTA

AGGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVES: ASSESSING COOPERATION IN THE POST-SOVIET AREA

DAVID ERKOMAISHVILI

Instead of a wide array of integration projects, the post-Soviet states have finally received two notable alternatives. Central Asians aside, the rest of the region's nations have a choice of two main centres – the EU or a family of former Soviet states.

Of course, it should not be assumed that there were no previous attempts to initiate a course towards integration within the region, in fact there were plenty. However, what has been emerging within the post-Soviet area since the collapse of the Soviet Union, that is, a number of wide-ranging cooperations, have finally been moulded into a cohesive integration project – the Eurasian Union. Promoted by Russian president Vladimir Putin under the banner of his third presidency, this framework has become the flagship tool of Moscow's policy vis-à-vis the post-Soviet states.

On the other side, there is a major EU initiative, designed to increase the bloc's involvement in the region. The Eastern Partnership has been a core instrument of the EU post-Soviet strategy for several years.

To be sure, the Eastern Partnership is an effort, promoted mainly by Poland and Sweden along with Germany, to compensate for the lack of strategies in the Union's toolkit for the area. It has been constructed on the basis of individual cooperation agreements that preceded the Eastern Partnership. As for the Eurasian Union, it is a new project. Its major political objective is to mirror the Eastern Partnership. By doing so, it aims to introduce an alternative to post-Soviet integration.

The project of the Eurasian Union has been consolidated on the basis of a number of previous frameworks that had made up the political and economic structure of the post-Soviet space. While the EU has been utilizing the familiar instruments of value-led and economy-based approach to advance its interests in the area, Russia has been led by its strategy to maintain its primacy in the post-Soviet area.

If one is to examine leading benefits and mechanisms that are offered by both frameworks, it will be clear that they are offering different conditions. In fact, those conditions are far from close.

The Eastern Partnership offers an Association Agreement to the most advanced partners, meaning those that have made some progress through reforms, and that have transformed and modernised societies along with governance. Conclusions of free trade agreements, opening up access to the massive EU market, along with short-term visa waivers are offered as incentives. Membership and integration in the EU are not on the agenda, and have never been. However, free trade and the unification of legal frameworks with the EU offer the possibility of an extensive cooperation, short of membership.

In its turn, Eurasian Union is a much wider idea. Firstly, and most importantly, it is based on the concept of integration. In contrast to the Association Agreement, it offers a full membership which brings along with it all the benefits of full-scale cooperation. Secondly, while both projects are aiming to achieve political alignment through economic integration, the Eurasian Union offers a more comprehensive political and economic package. This project offers Russia one particular advantage which is also the source of its main leverage – a trading pattern which Russia has the ability to manipulate, and successfully has been doing so in its numerous 'trading wars' with the post-Soviet nations.

Despite increasing trade with the EU, all of the post-Soviet states (with the exception of the Baltic States) have an overwhelming economic orientation towards Russia. It is their most important foreign market. The pattern is also an indication that for the last two decades since the fall of the Soviet Union, the post-Soviet states have been failing to break with their dependency on Russia in areas such as trade and energy.

Thus, the Eurasian Union offers full membership and access to the Russian market (Belarus and Kazakhstan are of less importance here, as all of the post-Soviet states have bilateral treaties with Minsk and Astana, and are aligned with each other in the Eurasian Union through Russia). This, in fact, gives Moscow a significant influence over its partners in the region.

Both projects leave little alternative for partners to cooperate within both frameworks, conditioning instead the 'either--or' model, where a partner state is required to make a clear decision in favour of only one framework.

The question is then: should Ukraine, as well as other post-Soviet states, be choosing between the two projects? Importantly, the pattern of choosing sides creates a bargaining position, which is a position of weakness in the case of Ukraine. Kyiv has to comply with the conditionality advanced by both sides, the EU and Russia, and has to eventually agree on the conditions which may be placing it into a disadvantaged position. Such a situation in its foreign policy resonates with its domestic policies: not only does this allow external actors to exert political influence over Kyiv, but eventually, it opens the state to internal manipulation, thus further escalating the societal divide. Such a situation, in turn, creates conditions for the reproduction of a dependency pattern.

Editor's note:

The full version of this text appeared as BR Working Paper #3. It can be downloaded from our website in PDF format. We would appreciate feedbacks, comments and suggestions from our readers.

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STATEMENT BY THE RADA OF THE BELARUSIAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BUDAPEST MEMORANDUM

December 5, 2014

Exactly twenty years ago, on 5 December 1994, the Memorandum on Security Assurances in Connection with the Accession of Belarus to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons was signed in Budapest. According to the said document, the Republic of Belarus made a commitment that nuclear weapons, which had been stationed in Belarus by the USSR leadership, would be withdrawn from its territory.

In return, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States assumed certain responsibilities which included the following:

- Respect the independence, sovereignty and existing borders of the Republic of Belarus,
- Refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity of the Republic of Belarus
- Refrain from economic coercion designed to subordinate to their own interest the exercise by Belarus of the rights that belong to its sovereignty,
- Seek immediate UN Security Council action to help the Republic of Belarus if the Republic of Belarus should become a victim of an act of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression.

Similar Memoranda were signed with Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Belarus, Ukraine and Kazakhstan did fulfil their obligations under the Memoranda.

However the events of 2014 - above all the illegal armed annexation of Crimea and the incitement of war in Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine - have presented a situation whereby the Russian Federation has indisputably violated every point of the Budapest Memorandum in respect of Ukraine, except for those that relate to the use of nuclear weapons against Ukraine.

For Belarus – which has been for a long time in effect subjected to economic aggression by Russia, and whose military and national security structures have been largely under Russia's control - this is an important negative precedent. The sovereignty of Belarus, as well as the security on the European continent in general, remain in acute danger from the aggressive revanchist policy of Russia's current government and that of President Vladimir Putin personally. The gross violations and de-facto denunciation of the Budapest memorandum by the Russian Federation have seriously amplified this danger.

The Rada of the Belarusian Democratic Republic calls on the international community, especially the United Kingdom and the United States as the Budapest Memorandum signatories, as well as on France, who subsequently granted the security assurances to Ukraine:

- To provide all possible support to Ukraine in its defence of its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Such support should include military and financial assistance, as well as expert assistance to the Government of Ukraine in developing and implementing of a reform program;
- Actively to contribute to the democratisation of the political regime in Belarus. It is the regime of unlimited personal power of Aliaksandr Lukashenka that presents the main risk to the independence of Belarus.

Referring to the provisions of the Memorandum on measures to ensure the independence of Belarus, signed on 3 November 2012 in Vilnius, the BNR Rada calls on all Belarusian political forces to implement internationally all measures possible in order to safeguard the independence of Belarus in the situation whereby the existing safeguards have shown themselves insufficient.

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The critical problem is to help Ukraine survive. That is the critical issue right now, as well as to contain Russian expansion, threat to other countries. For that to happen Ukraine has to succeed. They have to address their own democratic deficits, the corruption. To really get at the problems which have caused the economy and political system fail in the past. They can't do that if they are also not able to protect their territorial integrity. There they need stronger international support. Obviously, countries like Georgia and Moldova also need stronger Western support, but the critical test is now in Ukraine. If Ukraine can survive – what we think of as Putinism in Russia, which is great Russian chauvinism, hostility to Europe – I don't' think there is a future for it. People in Russia will have a chance to look for another alternative. The question is if Russia is alien civilization which cannot become part of Europe. We cannot give up on that. However, in order for that to happen, Ukraine has to survive and become a successful democracy. If Ukraine fails, then I think we are in for a much more dangerous situation. It is not just Ukraine which will suffer. Five years ago, Vaclav Havel was looking at the tendency of European governments to put economic interests before human rights and freedom. Havel said it is suicidal. Suicidal was the word that he used. Obviously, it has gotten a lot worse since then. So it is not just suicidal for the Baltic countries, or frontline former communist countries, it is also suicidal for the West and I think he was right about that.

Carl Gershman (President of the National Endowment for Democracy)
October 16, CEJISS

THOUGHTS & OBSERVATIONS

ON THE EVE OF A NEW PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN BELARUS

DAVID MARPLES

Two recent articles offered very different analyses of the current situation in Belarus. Balasz Jarabik, Visiting Scholar with the Russia and Eurasia Program of the Carnegie Endowment, offered a very optimistic scenario from the standpoint of positive changes, decreasing levels of repressions, and a gradual opening to the West. Anna Maria Dyner, a political scientist with the Polish Institute of International Affairs, is more sanguine, seeing less evidence of change and gloomy prospects of independent survival given events in Ukraine. Both acknowledge the weakness of the opposition and likely victory of incumbent president Aliaksandr Lukashenka in the 2015 presidential elections.

The Lukashenka regime without doubt has benefited from the crisis in Ukraine. Fear of instability and conflict has brought more support for the president, while leaving him in the difficult position of needing further rapprochement with the West at a time when sanctions are still in place. The economy remains largely state-run and unreformed, and the dependence on foreign loans—mostly Russian—has long been a feature of economic planning. There is a possibility of a new devaluation of the currency early in the New Year, though it is unlikely to affect the outcome of the next presidential election. The falling price of world oil has had a negative impact on Belarus, which has seen sales of oil products plummet.

The personal popularity rating of the president has risen from a low point of 20% in September 2011 to around 42% in September 2014, almost as high as it was during the peak of the election campaign in 2010. The task of the opposition is not only daunting; it appears well nigh impossible. The September 2014 survey by the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Research (IISEPS) included a section entitled "Who understands people like you?" It monitored the dynamics of trust ratings of the mass media and opposition parties and offers some insights into the political fortunes of the two over the past four years.

Support for state media dropped quite significantly between December 2010 and March 2013, but has enjoyed a revival over the past eighteen months. By September 2014, it was trusted by about 42%, most of which were supporters of Lukashenka and for the most part with only a primary education. Presumably the president relies on the impact of state media—particularly television—to disseminate his views of the world and he has been able to convince most easily the less well educated among the population. Non-state mass media has enjoyed a spectacular surge in recent times, reaching a peak of around 46% in December 2012, but has since fallen to around 40% today. Its backing derives both from supporters of Lukashenka and the opposition, though close to half the latter have faith in it and only about 30% of the president's supporters.

Concerning the opposition specifically, the format of the question is rather broad, as it does not distinguish between particular candidates, parties, or other formations. Still, the pattern seems clear. In response to the question "Do you think the Belarusian opposition understands issues and cares of people like you?", 24.4% responded positively in September 2013 and 21.2% a year later. The no vote has risen correspondingly from 55.6 to 59.2%. Almost 20% declined to answer either question. A significant proportion of the non-answering were respondents with a higher education, leading the analysts of IISEPS to surmise that with wisdom comes doubt. Translated in a different way, the survey demonstrates that the opposition leaders do not command the support of enough of the population to undermine the regime in the coming year.

This conclusion should not surprise us. Many of the opposition leaders are no longer in Belarus (Andrei Sannikov and Ales Mikhalevich were both presidential candidates in 2010, imprisoned and tortured afterward, and now live abroad), were harassed repeatedly in 2010-11 (Uladizmir Niaklaieu), are fading forces heading parties that have neglected to change their leaders for many years (Anatol Liabedzka of the United Civil Party is one example), or else are now too senior in years to play an active role (Stanislav Shushkevich, for example, turns 80 on December 15). One candidate from 2010—Mikalai Statkevich—remains incarcerated four years later, a sign of the special vindictiveness of the president toward those he considers incorrigible enemies. The Belarusian Christian Democratic Party remains unregistered by the authorities.

Appearing at a conference titled "Belarus—Closer to Europe or Russia?" that was held at the University of Lodz on December 5, Sannikov presented his views on the situation in Ukraine and the role of Russia and Belarus. He expressed his opinion that Ukrainians had conducted a heroic struggle for what he termed "the second wave of liberation in Europe" (the first being in the late 1980s). He made a direct analogy between the former Yanukovych regime in Ukraine and those of Vladimir Putin in Russia and Lukashenka in Belarus. But whereas in the late 1980s the Russian leader Mikhail Gorbachev was not a dictator and permitted the East European states to overthrow Communist leaders, the situation today is "absolutely different." Instead of Perestroika there is the restoration of empire. Putin initiated the war in Ukraine but has met resistance.

Both Sannikov and Charter-97 editor Natalia Radzina made a plea to the Europeans not to abandon Belarus. Their perception of the situation is not necessarily inaccurate, but it is not one that has been embraced to date by most of the

Belarusian population. Lukashenka has successfully exploited the Ukraine crisis for his own benefit by posing—as earlier—as the guarantor of peace and stability in Belarus, while taking mild sideswipes at his Moscow counterpart Putin in what has become a familiar pattern. This behavior may not have convinced many political leaders outside Belarus, but it would be a grave error to suggest that its impact has been negligible. The EU countries to the east have long debated the wisdom of courting the Belarusian president and some analysts perceive him still as a potential ally to limit or prevent further Russian expansion.

As others have pointed out, for many Belarusians the points of comparison for their country are not Western democracies, but the former states of the Soviet Union. Events in Ukraine shattered the illusion that Russia would accept Ukraine's inclusion in EU structures and exit from the "Russian orbit." Above all, it seems—and the IISEPS survey appears to confirm—a clear plurality of Belarusians are not prepared to defend their country in the manner of the Ukrainian ATO or volunteer battalions, but would prefer to adapt to the situation whether facing an invasion of Russia or NATO. Supporters of the president are more likely to resist an invasion from the West than one from Russia., but the level of resistance is likely to be less than that in Ukraine.

Can one reach any conclusions from the survey or from Belarusian responses to the events in Ukraine? One can tentatively offer the following:

> 1. Thus far the population has not perceived a direct correlation between the new government of Ukraine and the Belarusian opposition. Although there seems to be some sympathy for the changes in the southern neighbor, more endemic is a fear of analogous anti--government protests in Belarus and their likely consequences.
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> 2. Likewise the population does not equate the leadership of Lukashenka in Belarus with that of Putin in Moscow, despite the obvious similarities in leadership style and reliance on security forces in their respective countries. And clearly Belarusian and Russian interests are not unified. As analyst Andrei Sudaltsev has adroitly observed, the answer to the question whether Russia prefers a weak or a strong Belarus can be countered with an indirect response: Belarus would be interested in a *weak Russia* because it would allow the regime to pursue its own interests, to barter for low energy prices, etc. In other words, the Ukraine crisis has neither brought Moscow and Minsk closer nor further apart, but Belarus has its own direct interests to consider.
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> 3. For the electorate the key issues are peace and security, but also the desire for a decent standard of living and thus far—though not without some significant hiccups and procrastination in dealing with current problems—the Lukashenka regime has managed to survive. Under today's circumstances, survival is a much more significant achievement than has been perceived hitherto.
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> 4. For the opposition to change current perceptions of the electorate may depend not only on the survival of the Poroshenko-Yatseniuk leadership in Kyiv, but also would require a grassroots approach that can convince residents of Belarus that change is necessary and attainable, and that the standard of living could be better than it is, i.e. a direct comparison with a neighboring country like Poland or Lithuania, rather than Ukraine or Russia. And the first step would be to select a unified candidate (likely through the Congress of Democratic Forces) who can represent the interests of the workforce and—to a lesser extent—farmers. That candidate would need a feasible and convincing economic plan for the years ahead.

Past elections have shown that the fate of serious rival candidates is all too predictable: few avoid arrest and detention, threats to their families, KGB interrogations, and accusations of disservice to the state. Gradually Lukashenka has associated himself with Belarus and its survival, and he has tried to inculcate the belief that one cannot separate the country from the president personally. Thus to oppose him is itself an act of disloyalty. Interestingly, as his interviews with Grigory Ioffe indicate (Grigory Ioffe, *Reassessing Lukashenka* [Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 223]), he has a far more sympathetic attitude to an outright Belarusian nationalist like the exiled Zianon Pazniak than to domestic opposition leaders, not least because the latter tried overtly to solicit Moscow's support in 2010.

Some analysts maintain, however, that the president fears Pazniak precisely because of growing nationalist sentiment in the country. Such views point to the need to focus on the domestic situation. Opposition candidates, real and potential, will need to move beyond the stictly "European" policy given the problems faced by Ukraine merely in the process of signing an Association Agreement. One can go to Europe, but not if the door is firmly closed. It would be more logical for the opposition to focus on domestic issues rather than foreign policy, to reform industries and restructure the economy, to expand the sort of vision offered in 2010 and more recently by economist Iaraslau Ramanchuk, based on privatization of state industries.

Perhaps then the alternative is a new vision for Belarus. It is not unfeasible. After all, the incumbent president has been in power for over two decades, from the age of 39 to 60. His physical deterioration and ageing is quite evident (not least because he is always in the public eye), and his fear of mortality was indicated for example by his overreaction to the death of his friend Hugo Chavez last year. And through all the twists and turns, and—no doubt at times brilliant—maneuvers to confound his enemies, what has been lacking throughout has been any form of vision. Rather the president has tried to reflect the views of his citizens, ranging from the early pro-Russian and pro-Soviet nostalgia (1994-99) to the present contentment with an independent Belarus and a

mildly nationalistic attitude that is still very far from the sort of fanaticism on display in parts of Western Ukraine.

A leader, indeed a very strong leader, Lukashenka has never actually led; rather he has maintained and enhanced his own power, sometimes brutally, while undermining or eliminating his perceived enemies. In the meantime his policies change as quickly as Italian prime ministers. The only perceivable presidential vision, and one that I explored in depth in my recent book ('*Our Glorious Past*'), has been linked to the past, and the equation of his state with victory in the Great Patriotic War, a reworking of historical memory that required some outlandish contortions, but one that ultimately cannot be sustained. It has necessitated an association with events too distant to be remembered. Moreover, nothing in that vision relates to current society.

The younger generation does not understand the importance of World War II and they have observed at first hand European societies that are more open and more affluent than their own, including those in states defeated in that war, like Germany and Italy. Over one-third of young people were considering emigration last year, according to a survey of BISS. In short, there has always been a certain distance between the president and young people, and room for difference forces and influences to emerge. Generation gaps may exist in any society.

Yet focus in 2015 simply on an outdated focus on "the dictatorship" will not be enough to bring about change. The dictator in question is a master of the art of survival and direct assaults may even be counter-productive given current security concerns for the Belarusian state. Election years, however, do at least present an opportunity for an alternative vision of the future. For this at least, they are of value.

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Despite the fact that 2015 is a political year, let us proceed from the real situation. We should retain the status quo. There should be no promises, no pay-offs prior to the election. We will have hard times if we siphon off government funds to weather the current global recession... The main thing is that we should preserve the current level of prosperity and operation of our state. With a small growth just to maintain momentum. If we have more, if the circumstances allow, especially the external ones, it will be great.

Aliaksandr Lukashenka

November 12, BelTA

A boycott is forbidden by law, so we cannot be soft in the issue. Those calling for a boycott will be brought to administrative responsibility. Candidates will be withdrawn if their programmes contain calls for a boycott.

Lidzia Yarmoshyna

(Belarus' Central Election Commission Chairperson

December 10, Charter97

PRUDENT APPROACH TO BELARUS REQUIRES COMPREHENSIVE AND HONEST ASSESSMENT

VALERY KAVALEUSKI

Carnegie Endowment fellow Balazs Jarabik in his piece Revisiting Belarus: The Reality Beyond the Rhetoric makes an attempt to paint a comprehensive picture of the situation in Belarus, in political sphere, economy, and society. The article portrays selective facts and figures from a peculiar perspective. Rumors and whispers from unnamed sources are used to formulate rather heavyweight but unsubstantiated conclusions. Important trends are reframed and presented to create specific perceptions of Belarusian President Lukashenka, of his role in the current situation in Belarus and in relations with the outer world. In this article I present my comments to such allegations and claims and fill in some factual gaps left either intentionally or accidentally. The comments are laid out in the order of appearance of claims in Jarabik's article.

Claim: Belarus has a long history of authoritarianism.

Comment: The authoritarianism is not inherent to Belarus and its people. Yet Belarus has a history of authoritarianism under Lukashenka, who usurped the power in 1994. Moreover, Belarus has a long history of resisting authoritarianism. Before Lukashenka arrived, Belarus developed as a young state that respected fundamental freedoms, human rights, and democratic standards.

Claim: Lukashenka's power was solidified in 1996 with a referendum that rolled back a nascent democratic opening.

Comment: This was not just a referendum and its results were not legitimate. The parliament ran a procedure in 1996 to impeach Lukashenka for numerous cases of him violating the Constitution in just two years time. The impeachment procedure was abruptly cancelled as a result of the deal mastered by high-ranking Russian mediators. That referendum vote was controlled by Lukashenka, supported by Russia, was fraudulent and has launched the authoritarian regime under Russia's protectorate that has gradually developed in a dictatorship of today.

Claim: Ten years ago, businesses were the enemy of the state. Today, they are the country's new hope.

Comment: Apples and oranges are mixed here. The state and country are not the same. Lukashenka and his regime have always viewed businesses with suspicion because of the limited control they could exercise over it. Although the private sector has increased its role in country's economy, the state sees it not as a hope, but as a permanent threat to Lukashenka's rule, and tries to keep it in check.

Claim: The Belarusian economy is also still very dependent on subsidies and preferential treatment from Russia.

Comment: The Belarusian economy is increasingly dependent on Russia, and its economy is steadily moving towards recession.

Claim: the potential for transformation is limited because every policy decision is underwritten by the *siloviki* (the military and security services).

Comment: This is an obvious attempt to separate the personality of Lukashenka from the ongoing processes in Belarus, to make him less or not responsible at all for the dire state of the economy, politics, and society of Belarus. The truth is that Lukashenka has always maintained very effective control over the *siloviki*, and not visa versa. His older son Viktar Lukashenka has been in complete charge of the entire *siloviki* block since 2005, a sufficient proof to understand that Lukashenka is not taking chances with these matters.

Claim: Belarusians are traditionally dependent on the state, so any shift [in the current state-controlled economic model] could provoke popular resentment.

Comment: This claim is especially biased as it depicts Belarusians as an immature, dependent populace that looks to the state for orders and guidance. This claim contradicts the trend, previously mentioned in the article, of a growing role of private sector, where people (57% of population) earn for living without state's help, in fact very often they survive in spite of state's efforts. So far, the only broad popular resentment independent Belarus has seen has been directed against the strengthening dictatorship of Lukashenka. All those people behind prison bars for political reasons or were forced to leave the country are Belarusians.

Claim: Minsk's two most acclaimed values have traditionally been stability and independence.

Comment: Minsk successfully sells both values. Stability is sold to the West, and the independence gradually is transferred to Russia in return for energy subsidies, trade preferences, and cheap loans when Lukashenka needs them most. In reality, the vast repressive apparatus sustains stability. Independence is under increasing control of Moscow.

Claim (somewhat off-topic but related): part of Ukraine has split off in favor of union with Russia.

Comment: There was no such split off in Ukraine. There was no broad grass root campaign to discuss alternatives like in Scotland. Instead there has been a deliberate, poorly disguised Russia's annexation of territories and instigation and support of hostilities in Ukraine.

Claim: In private conversations, Belarusians often say that being a closed, even isolated, society has been a survival tactic. [] Such a mentality is not easy to overcome.

Comment: This is a clear attempt to shift blame for the self--inflicted international isolation from the erratic Lukashenka's foreign policy to the people of Belarus. Belarus has never been a closed or isolated society – it just does not have any natural obstacles to interactions with the external world, be they positive or negative. It is telling that Belarusians receive more Schengen visas per capita than any other nation. Domestically, Lukashenka himself actively imposes the acceptance of this reality in mentality of Belarusians, when he insists that Europe does not need Belarus and that EU and U.S. wish to enslave Belarusians. At the same time externally the regime speaks about Belarus that is open to the world.

Claim: This is unsatisfactory for those in the EU who see the Eastern Partnership in zero-sum terms. The partnership does not talk about membership, but if Belarusians had to choose, they would choose Russia.

Comment: There have never been high expectations regarding Belarus's prospects in the Eastern Partnership. It was always more of a gateway to engage Belarus and establish additional communication channel. Zero-sum terms in EaP are completely not applicable with regard to Belarus. The claim that Belarusians would choose Russia not EU is not supported by the poll number that shows 32 % Belarusians favor the EU. Moreover, this number exists amidst the aggressive and omnipresent Russian propaganda bashing the West. Lukashenka's propaganda also paints distorted picture of the EU and U.S. If there is an open and fair public debate on the question of partnership, this number of Belarusians viewing EU favorably will be much higher.

Claim: Minsk is also frustrated by the West's (almost) exclusive focus on human rights and by the lack of international acceptance that Russia may threaten Belarus.

Comment: Agenda of relations of Belarus with the West is rather vast: trade, investments, transnational crime, educational exchange, human trafficking etc. Perhaps, it is worth fixing human rights situation to shift the focus to other substantial issues. Lukashenka's regime for a number of years has been selling the "Russian threat" to the West. It has worked before, and Western reaction to the lawlessness in Belarus was softer so as "not to push Belarus in Russia's embrace". With Russia occupying neighbors' lands it works even better.

Claim: The EU's ability to maneuver has been constrained by its choice of only one partner: the opposition forces that lost the fight to Lukashenka.

Comment: The main obstacle to the dialogue is Lukashenka's deliberate long-standing campaign to strengthen his personal rule and eliminate any potent political opposition.

Claim: It is time to discard the pretense that "nothing is possible" in Belarus—a phrase often repeated by Belarusian political activists in the West—and adopt a policy that is not based on simply backing one side but addresses the country as a whole.

Comment: Political opposition and civil society struggle in Belarus and abroad and they do not allow the situation in the country to stall altogether. "Nothing is possible" mood is just not welcome in talks with foreign partners. Lukashenka needs improved relations with the West much more than the West needs better relations with Belarus. For Lukashenka (and, unfortunately, for Belarus as being under his full control), it is an existential issue. For the West – a tactical matter. For every positive move of the West, be it a public statement, an official visit, or removed trade restriction, there must be a step of Lukashenka towards dismantling the dictatorship in Belarus. This situation is abnormal to the country and to the people of Belarus, and the West has a leverage to play constructive role to fix it.

Claim: There is already a growing acceptance in Belarus of the Russian world. Rossotrudnichestvo, a Russian cultural out-

reach organization, recently opened an office in Brest on Belarus's border with Poland. There are rumors that the Kremlin supported opposition projects before the 2010 election, and the then Russian president, Dmitry Medvedev, kicked off an anti-Lukashenka campaign.

Comment: Mixing apples and oranges by connecting different things: the Russian world and opposition projects at 2010 elections (based on rumors), with a subtle speculation that Lukashenka is against the Russian world, meaning that he is to be supported and not be pressured.

Claim: police order to deport Elena Tonkacheva is a quiet purge of Russian citizens before the 2015 presidential elections.

Comment: Again, apples, oranges, and whispers. This is a rather clumsy attempt to explain Lukashenka's pressure on civil society by Russia's war in Ukraine and upcoming elections while bringing in the ethnic issue, which is virtually non-existent in Belarus. Elena Tonkacheva is a prominent and effective human right defender, who has never made her Russian citizenship an object of public discussions. What purging one Russian citizen before the vote in presidential elections might accomplish?

Claim: Political prisoners identified by Amnesty International should be released.

Comment: All political prisoners, not just those identified by Amnesty International (Mikalai Statkevich and Eduard Lobau), must be released. Those who were imprisoned or sentenced and released by now must be rehabilitated and their political rights must be restored.

Omitted facts and events that have influenced the relations between Belarus and the West as well as shaped the internal situation in the country:

- Impeachment procedure against Lukashenka in 1996
- Death squads and disappearances of political opposition in 1999-2000
- Referendum of 2004 to remove two-term restriction for presidency for one person
- Continued illegitimacy of Lukashenka's presidency
- Pervasive corruption (ranked 119 of 175 nations according to Transparency International Index
- Absence of the rule of law (ranked 50 of 99 nations according to World Justice Project Index)
- Deliberate systemic long standing efforts to weaken Belarusian identity and confine Belarusian culture to a ghetto
- Absence of the dialogue between society and authorities
- Complete absence of accountability of the authority before the society
- Dismantled system of checks and balances to keep the president and government in check
- Recent initiative of Lukashenka to introduce forced labor for unemployed Belarusians

Note: Full version of this text is available at belaruspolitics.blogspot.com, the personal blog of Valery Kavaleuski/

CULTURE & HISTORY

POLISH NATIONAL MINORITY IN BELARUS AS A RESEARCH PROBLEM

ANDRZEJ TICHOMIROW

The history and the current situation of minorities in Europe continue to be significant research issues, even though various researchers have made efforts to cover them. In the case of the Republic of Belarus, relations between various social groups (including national and ethnic minorities, religious minorities and others) constitute one of the basic aspects of its' existence as an independent state. Stereotype assumptions about relations between individual ethnic communities, state policies and "research rhetoric" usually present Belarus as an extraordinarily tolerant country where every representative of any national minority may freely maintain a separate ethnic identity. The level of social acceptance of other ethnic groups is indeed very high, but can we really speak about a general tolerance towards otherness?

The Polish community in Belarus is an interesting case for investigation for several reasons. First of all, the Poles – the third largest ethnic group after Belarusians and Russians, have lived on the territory of Belarus for several centuries and in many regions they are a long-lived and cohesive group with their own institutions. The Poles also have their place in the way Belarusians perceive the world: there are rather firm stereotypes about the Polish minority in Belarus as well as about Poles as a nation, which are either traditional, based on many centuries of contacts, or based on recent events or political and social processes of the past 20 years.

The Polish minority is a research object that includes several fundamental issues. One of the main problems is the definition and scientific qualification of the Polish population in Belarus. There are several concepts for this issue, which may be summarized as follows:

1. Poles as a national minority, including the issue of group identification and without denying their belonging to or identification with Polishness;

2. People with undetermined or mixed ethnic or cultural identity who in fact are Roman Catholic Belarusians. This approach is very widespread among Belarusian scholars and has a quite a long-lasting historical tradition in scholarship, in political discourse and in journalism;

3. Poles in Belarus are part of the Polish nation outside Poland (this definition is very similar to the first, while at the same time pointing out minimal ties of that group with Belarus and with Belarusians). This refers to Poles in Belarus as a separate ethnic group, which has more historical and social ties with Belarusians and Lithuanians

than with Poland and Poles. This concept relates to the historical multilevel ethnic consciousness on the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania, to relations between the Polish population in Lithuania – mostly in the Vilnius region and Poles in Belarus. This concept is supported by the following: co-existence in one geographic territory, prolonged non-existence of a state border between the historical Vilnius region and western Belarus and part of Latgale, being part of the same state – the Russian Empire, the Second Polish Republic and later the Soviet Union, and subsequently forming common characteristics of Poles in those territories.

The approaches mentioned above are all related, because individual elements of these concepts can combine and demonstrate various aspects of the identification problem of the Polish population in Belarus. An important element in defining the Polish population is belonging to Polishness: different levels of belonging to the Polish culture and national traditions, knowledge of the Polish language, Polish self--identification. Apart from the mentioned characteristics, one of the more important attributes of Polishness is the Roman Catholic faith, which, at least in the western part of the country, is seen as the "Polish church" or, in the common language, "Polish faith". It is true however that at present this denomination is expanding its influence on the Belarusian population and it is gradually becoming more "Belarusian", particularly in the eastern part of the country.

An important characteristic which has impact on the preservation of Polish identity is the geographic location of this group. Living in cohesive groups and a proximity of the border with Poland (in the period of the USSR also with Lithuania) help to preserve the community and social institutions (multi-generational families, Polish organisations, church-structures). Opportunities for intensive contacts with Poland and access to Polish media also have influence on the level of Polish identification and historical memory.

It would be worth undertaking comparative studies of the Polish minority and other minorities in Belarus and their cooperation with relevant organizations. In the regional context the most interesting results could come from a comparative analysis of the Polish minority in Lithuania, Latvia and Ukraine, as they share similar historical experien ces and problems typical for post-soviet countries, and have been exposed to political transformation, despite living in the rather differentiated social conditions of each country. The situation in Lithuania and in Latvia is significantly different from that in Ukraine, although the latter may be a better comparative background in many respects. Nevertheless, considering the historical and geographical context, it is worthwhile to compare the situation of Belarusian Poles with their kin in Lithuania and Latvia, particularly in the border regions.

Editor's note:

The full version of this text appeared as BR Working Paper #1. It can be downloaded from our website in PDF format. We would appreciate feedbacks, comments and suggestions from our readers.

JAŬHIEN MIRANOVIČ: NO ONE COULD STOP STALIN IN SETTLING TERRITORIAL PROBLEMS

In 2015 it will be the 70th anniversary of the transfer of the city of Białystok and its adjacent areas from the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic to the communist Poland based on the Soviet-Polish border treaty. As a result, the current Belarusian-Polish border was established and a single ethno-cultural region was divided into the Belarusian and Polish parts. How has the establishment of this border affected the relations between Belarusians and Poles in the region of Białystok? What did it mean for the Belarusians of the Białystok region and the Poles of the Hrodna region? How could today's Belarus look like if the Białystok region would have remained within its borders? The Belarusian Review *has asked Professor* Jaŭhien Miranovič *(Polish:* Eugeniusz Mironowicz*) these questions.*

Jaŭhien Miranovič: "The contemporary Belarusian-Polish border is the result of complex political processes which took place in 1943-1944. In 1943, the Soviet leadership received approval from the U.S. and British allies on establishing the border with Poland in accordance with Lord Curzon's concept proposed back in 1920. That proposal was similar to the variant of the border line which was defined by the Soviet authorities in 1944. However, everything indicates that at the time of the liberation of Białystok in July 1944, the plan was to include the region in the Belarusian SSR. By the end of the Nazi occupation no Polish underground Communist structures of political power had been established, all authorities of this kind were Soviet. At that time, no one was able to prevent Stalin from deciding territorial boundaries in this part of Europe. Stalin gave Polish Communists the region of Białystok to strengthen their position among the Poles.

Perhaps this territorial division has divided a single ethno--cultural entity, but this has become obvious only after decades of time. I do not think that after the war the Belarusians of the Białystok regions felt any common destiny with the Belarusians of the Hrodna region. In case of the local Poles it was otherwise, as before the war they had had their state with the border near Minsk. From being centrally-located the Białystok Voivodeship became peripheral. Therefore, the Polish anti-communist opposition movement was both anti-Soviet and anti-Belarusian here. The Belarusian SSR became the successor of the political changes in this area. The authors of these changes – the Stalin leadership – were not here, while Belarusians and Poles were here. Negative emotions were directed towards Belarusians. Belarusians responded similarly. Fortunately, the Belarusian-Polish border did not face anything similar to the Ukrainian-Polish border. If the Białystok region had remained within Belarus, the situation here would probably be very similar to the today's Hrodna region. Instead of speaking Polish, Russian could be heard here, cultural festivals of the Polish minority would take place, and President Lukašenka would receive his 80% of votes in each election."

AGAIN ABOUT SKARYNA IN PADUA: NEW POSSIBILITIES OF READING THE OLD DOCUMENTS

TIME, CONTEXT, CIRCUMSTANCES AND ATTENDEES

VOLHA SHUTAVA

PREFACE

This article once again draws our attention to the documents of Skaryna's doctoral defence in Padua. The author's in-depth reading of these documents helps to fill some lacunas in Skaryna's biography, for example, the exact *time* of Skaryna's defence, while their *comparison* with the other doctoral defence acts of the period allows to evaluate Skaryna's case in the context of the academic life and medical studies of Renaissance Europe.

Skaryna's case is consistent with the ordinary bureaucratic procedures of the time: his examinations consisted of three stages (*Gratia, Tentativum, Privatum*). *Privatum* and *Gratia* were not specifically attributed to Skaryna as most researchers state. However, the study of the costs of the degrees, of new details on his audience and of the medical and philosophical contexts of the examinations allow to appreciate the singularity of Skaryna's case from different perspectives.

Certainly, Skaryna's stay in Padua was a milestone both for his career as a doctor and for his future as a printer. The study of Skaryna's audience – a total of thirty-three persons – shows that at least three of them were quite likely (and in the case of the famous scribe Bartolomeo Sanvito - certainly) *involved in book printing activities*. Further research reveals that the *reverendus dominus* Bartholomeus de S. Vito was in fact Bartolomeo Sanvito, the famous Paduan Renaissance scribe, one of the creators of Italic script, an illuminator and antiquary, linked with many Italian humanists, such as the illustrious printer and publisher Aldo Manuzio. Such „materialization" of Skaryna's audience can lead to a better understanding of his connections in the world of Renaissance culture and of his reasons for becoming the printing pioneer of his country.

INTRODUCTION

The story of probably the most famous documentary evidence about Skaryna's life – the 1512 records of his doctoral degree defence at the University of Padua – was for a long time a classic of Skaryniana: the discovery of the Paduan documents by the Polish scholar Stanisław Windakiewicz in 1892, their publication by I. Šliapkin (Braha 1964, 13-4)[1], as well as a sensational addition to them made by Jan Sadoŭski in 1960 – a copy of the archival records of the Episcopal Curia in Padua, in which Skaryna is called *secretarii regis Datiae* (Sadoŭski 1969, 25-8).

Half a century has passed since Sadouski's painstaking work on the editions, translations and the interpretation of these documents.[2] It seemed that this page of Skaryniana had been fully studied and became almost banal. And yet, in my unwitting French ‚reclusion', while again and again turning my thoughts to Skaryna, the first Belarusian ‚expat', I was lucky enough to find a book - *The Acts of the Doctoral Degree Defences at the University of Padua 1501-1525* (*Acta Graduum Academicorum ab anno 1501 – ad annum 1525*, Forin 1969). Here, in the midst of a long list of doctoral defenses, I saw the records about Francysk Skaryna.

Undoubtedly, the book edited by the Italian Renaissance historian and Latinist Elda Martellozzo Forin would include such records. However, I was surprised by the fact that all conventional accounts of these acts, known to a wider audience through the publications by Sadoŭski, Tatarynovič, Daraškievič and Parecki differed from the texts published by Forin.

This observation provided the impetus for a long research venture and its results are presented in this article.

I must admit that while starting to work on "the Paduan episode" of Skaryna's life, I had not had the opportunity to study the article „Skaryna in Padua" by Vitaŭt Tumaš. In it the author highlighted many aspects which I - independently of him – am addressing in this text; due to various reasons these aspects, however, were actually omitted by the "official" Belarusian historiography both before and after the collapse of the Soviet Union. These until presently omitted aspects comprise the history of the University of Padua and its "liberal" atmosphere, the personalities who attended Skaryna's defence, the emphasis on Skaryna's proper medical qualification, and the notion of *gratie*.

When I got the opportunity to consult Tumaš's work, the basic framework of the present article had already been developed. However, it turned out that though the dimensions of our research were quite consistent, the main details and arguments differed. The key differences were not only the clarification of the time of Skaryna's defence and of its attendees (for instance, Bartolomeo Sanvito and others), but the very approach to the text "within the context", a consideration of new details against the background of the documents of other defences which have provided me with the opportunity to compare Skaryna's case with others, and thus try to expand the picture of the Paduan episode of Skaryna's life. I believe that this text will be interesting for a wider readership and enrich the Skaryniana.

SOME HISTORIOGRAPHY

The history of Skaryna's documents in Padua had started much earlier than Vitaŭt Tumaš once reported (Braha 1970, 38-9). Indeed, in the 18th century Giuseppe Minato and, independently from him, Francesco Dorighello started to collect and classify the data to compile a collection of acts from the University of Padua Archive and a chronological list of all people who had been awarded a doctoral degree at the University of Padua. However, even earlier in 1654 a famous Italian scholar, historian and Bishop Giacomo Tomasini wrote the first history of the University of Padua using the acts of defenses (Tomasini 1654). Later in 1726 a historian and lawyer Niccolò Comneno Papadopoli (born in Crete, then moved to Italy and taught at Padua) published his *Historia gymnasii patavini*. It

referred to the work by Tomasini and significantly extended it. The book contains brief biographies of the Paduan students and lecturers (Papadopoli 1726). In fact, his *Historia* triggered various controversies and disputes (for example, a record of *Copernicus Nicolaus*: vol. 3, liber secundus, p. 195, No. 66, under the year of Copernicus' death in 1543 declares his national affiliation as *Polonorum*). Papadopoli's Historia was extended by Jacopo Facciolati whose book on the University of Padua history starts from 1517, i.e. after Skaryna left Padua (Facciolati 1757).

Already in the early 20th century Italian historians Gasparo Zonta and Giovanni Brotto from the Institute of History at the University of Padua referred to the documents from the university archives and published *Acta graduum academicorum gymnasii Patavini ab anno MCCCCVI ad annum MCCCCL* (Zonta, Brotto 1922).

In 1969, an Italian Latinist Elda Martellozzo Forin continued their work, overcoming such typical traces of time as water stains, scratches, abbreviations, handwriting errors, etc. She brought together, transcribed and publshed original Latin records from the University of Padua Archive (*Archivio Antico dell'Università di Padova*), the Episcopal Curia Archive (*Archivio della Curia Vescovile*), and the State Archive of Padua (*Archivio di stato di Padova*) dated by the period in question. However, as the author admitted, the "technical" difficulties were the slightest obstacles for the publication, as the main problem caused the omission of whole years. For example, volumes 45 – 57 of the documentary records of Episcopal Curia (known as the so-called *Diversorum*) cover the period from January 1501 to January 1533 (it is *Diversorum* vol. 49 that contains the record discovered by J. Sadoŭski). This problem apparently emerged due to the hostilities that took place during the war of the League of Cambrai (1508 - 1516) in which Padua was involved as a Venetian vassal.

Additionally, according to Forin, a researcher faces here very illegible handwriting, omissions and abbreviations of both terms (for example, *nem. pen. diss.* – which is very important in Skaryna's case as it means *nemine penitus dissentiente*, a formula of an outstanding defence when "no one in the audience had objections")[3] and personal names (Forin 1969, XII).

Forin's goal was to properly decrypt the old records and names and "restore" their meaning by comparing the acts that are stored in the archives of the University of Padua and the Episcopal Curia. As a result, our four Paduan documents can be viewed in new terms.

Firstly, we have got the opportunity to verify the Latin cursive through a complex decryption made by Forin. Secondly, it led us to the possibility to improve our knowledge about the time and circumstances of the examinations, their details, names of the persons who attended these examinations, as well as to gather biographic details about these personalities. Moreover, in the Skaryna's case it was particularly important to examine these documents within the context of other doctoral defences that had been taking place in Padua at that time.

PART ONE. TIME AND CONTEXT

TIME

Skaryna's Paduan texts traditionally begin with a typical for all defenses form: '*1512 nov. 5. Padue in eccl. S. Urbani hora XVII. Gratie in med. amore Dei mag. Francisci Rutheni q. d. Luce*' (Forin 1969, 226) – "On Friday, November 5, 1512 in Padua, in St. Urban Church at 5 pm…" (Braha 1970, 68).

The defence scheduled at 5 pm is literally eye-catching. This is, of course, a bit late, but still acceptable, since it can be assumed that the members of the academic Board could take their decision on the Skaryna's admission to the trial exam quite quickly.

The second meeting of the Sacred Board on Skaryna's case poses more questions. According to all publications,[4] this second meeting (i.e. Skaryna's trial exam) took place in the same location on November 6 at 10 pm (*hora XXII*). A trial exam that starts at 10 pm! Even if we assume that the first meeting (on November 5) that started at 5 pm was quite short, such a late start of the second meeting devoted to the trial defense which usually lasted for hours seems at least strange.

Actually, while reading the records of the defenses' archive of the University of Padua, one can observe an obvious trend: the vast majority of defenses took place precisely in such rather "late" time. What was the reason?

In fact, there is quite simple explanation for it: the Italians of the Renaissance measured daytime differently than we do now. Indeed, they divided the day into 24 hours, but their 24-hour division started at the sunset! In other words, the sunset was the hour 0; 1 am – the first hour after sunset, 2 am – two hours after sunset, etc.

One should also consider, that the academic year in the Italian universities in this period began on October 18 but classes usually started after the All Saints' Day, i.e. about November 2. While emphasizing that the sunset in early November in Italy took place at 6 pm, the famous American researcher of the Renaissance Paul F. Grendler demonstrated compliance of classes schedule of the Italian university's at the time with the contemporary counting of daytime (Grendler 2002, 147).

Thus, *hora XVII* (5 pm) in our first Paduan record on Skaryna's admission to the defense and *hora XXII* (10 pm) in the second document on Skaryna's trial exam are in fact 11 am and 4 pm respectively!

Hence, a careful reading of our allegedly "jammed into holes" Paduan texts has opened the way for new research which in particular focuses on the context and circumstances of Francysk Skaryna's exams in Padua.

CONTEXT

A comparison of the texts of acts of doctoral defenses at the University of Padua at Skaryna's times (i.e. in 1501-1525), as confirmed by a number of special studies (Verger 2003, 144-6; Frijhoff 2003, 360-2; Grendler 2002, 175-178; Forin 1969), demonstrates that that the process of obtaining of a doctoral degree in this and in many other European universi-

ties took place in three stages:

1) a candidate's appeal to the Sacred Board (*Sacro Collegio*) for the so-called request of grace (*Gratia*);

2) trial exam (*Tentativum*);

3) personal exam (*Privatum*) and obtaining doctoral dignity signs (*Insignia*).

The first stage was the candidate's request to the Sacred Board – *Gratia*.

The *Sacro Collegio* was in fact an independent from the university authority and consisted mainly not of the university professors but of local celebrities who had got doctoral degrees in the relevant field. Sometimes, but not necessarily, university professors of great fame were also parties to the board (Grendler 2002, pp. 174-75).

The candidate had to contact the Sacred Board with a request of the so-called "grace" (*gratia*) which was *a mandatory initial stage for any doctoral candidate*. In the period in question all applicants, including Skaryna, had to pass through this procedure. We focus on this aspect because up to present it was out of sight for the the most scholars dealing with Skaryna.[5] According to them, the *gratia* of the first lines of Paduan document No.1 was translated as "by the name of the love to the Lord" and explained as *a special favour granted only and exclusively to Skaryna*, the candidate who was a poor and came from far away, in order to enable him to take the exam for free (obviously, this tradition was established by I. Šliapkin's interpretation of *gratia* as "free"). In fact, *the term* gratia *meant a stage of the procedure which all candidates had to pass through*, although the terms for the payment "reduction" were often discussed here.

At this first stage, a candidate should be brought before the Sacred Board in person (or authorize one of its members to represent him before the Board) in order to prove his ability to pass the exam. A candidate had to provide evidence that he had already studied for a certain number of years (at least for four years, in some cases for seven years) in a public educational establishement, participated in public debates in person (at least in one and often in two disputations). Additionally, candidates for the degree of doctor of medicine needed to certify that they had worked with a practicing doctor (Grendler 2002, 175) and provide a guarantee of the exam payment which was quite high.

One of the documents *Acta graduum academicorum* (No. 860) contains a very detailed list of fees that a doctoral candidate needed to pay. An in-depth overview of this document will be made below. At this stage, it should be emphasized that these payments ranged from university to university. For example, Ferrari describes the fees for the doctorates at the University of Pavia in the late 15th century as truly luxurious: 600 lire per exam and a solemn ceremony, in addition a candidate had to buy ceremonial clothes for a large number of people, as well as to pay for food, Malvasia wine, etc. (Ferrari 1899, 32—33).

During the period in question the fees in Padua averaged 20 ducats (120 lire). However, if a doctoral candidate was famous for its origin and wealth, the payments to the Sacred Board members and the award ceremony sometimes reached 300 lire (1 lira was 20 soldi, 1 ducat was 6 lire 4 soldi, i.e. in total 124 soldi – Chambers 1992, 461).

Often, however, the candidates requested to deduct at least half or the fee or fully excempt them from paying it. In this case many candidates referred to the distance from home, their special achievements, difficult economic conditions due to war or flood, or, as usual, used their contacts and presented a letter of recommendation (Forin 1969, XI). The Board gave its concent by voting. Only during this first meeting was it possible to request grace and present all "mitigating circumstances". It was at the first meeting when while requesting *gratia* Skaryna referred to his povery and the distance he made to reach Padua. Skaryna's request fully complied with the established form which also can be found in cases of other candidates: '*art. doctor pauper qui a longinquissimis partibus forsam per quatuor millia milliaria et ultra ab hac*'.

The second stage, *Tentativum* or trial exam, was the most important one. At this stage it was decided whether a candidate deserves to be awarded a doctoral degree. A candidate could appear at the trial exam when he was helped by the *promotores* which he had already chosen. However, in many cases promoters were appointed by the Board during its first meeting. Approximately twelve hours before the exam,[6] and possibly, even earlier, as in Skaryna's case, a candidate had been provided with the examination themes – *puncta* (Forin 1969, XI). As a rule, these were two to four extracts randomly chosen from the main statutory texts on the defence subject. For a doctoral degree in medicine the excerpts from the texts by Avicenna, Galen and Hippocrates were chosen (Grendler 2002, 177).

In fact, everyone knows that in the Paduan documents Skaryna is twice called *artium doctor*. It is therefore obvious that he previously had somewhere passed an examination in arts. At that time, as in the majority of applications for the *artium doctor* degree, Skaryna had to be offered *puncta* from Aristotle works (Grendler 2002, 176), particularly because Aristotle teachings comprised philosophical foundations of the medical knowledge during the Medieval and Renaissance eras.

We know that Skaryna brilliantly presented himself during his Paduan defense of punctis: '*art. doct. d. mag. Franciscus q. d. Luce Scorina de Poloczko Ruthenus in med. supra punctis hoc mane sibi assignatis et, quoniam – elegantissime se habuit, ideo nemine penitus dissentiente, fuit idoneus iudicatus et – ad examen suum privatum in med. – admissus*' – (Doctor of Arts and Magister [of Medicine – VS] Francysk son of the deseased Luka Skaryna from Polack, Ruthenian, commented with elegance the aforementioned themes (*puncta*) in medicine, which he had received this morning,– no objections - and thus, was found eligible for personal examination in medicine). This fact gives us a reason to ponder the questions: what knowledge should a young doctor obtain? What was studied at the medical faculties? What were the medical practices of that time?

MEDICAL CURRICULUM

The topic of university medical knowledge of the Middle Ages and Renaissance in Europe has not attracted significant attention of the Belarusian scholars, and certainly needs more thorough research than the cursory glance that could be afforded in this article. However, one cannot ignore such an important moment of Skaryna's biography as his career as a doctor (it was no accident that he emphasized the fact of his doctoral title!).

To the time of Skaryna's defence medical knowledge went a long way from antiquity, medieval scholasticism to the "return" of ancient authors to the Christian Europe indirectly through Arab authors and their Latin translators and commentators (Siraisi 1990, X).

Like all universities in the Renaissance Europe, the medical knowledge at the Faculty of Arts and Medicine in Padua had inherited an authoritative set of ancient and medieval texts that were used for training of future physicians. As a rule, the teaching was organised in three main areas: theory of medicine, practice of medicine and surgery. Medical curriculum at the Faculty at that time relied on the authority of the three autorities ancient, medieval and Renaissance medicine – Avicenna, Hippocrates and Galen. Their works were the main texts for teaching. Already V. Tumaš addessed few lines to subjects taught at the University of Padua (Braha/Tumaš 1970, 52). However, we have a chance to look it in the curriculum.

Among the medical disciplines taught in Padua the "ordinary theoretical medicine" (*Ad theoricam ordinariam medicina*) was considered the main one. It was taught to students for two hours in the morning and was based on Avicenna's "Canon" for freshmen, Hippocrates' "Aphorisms" for sophomores, and Galen's "Tegni" (Galen's work Art of Medicine or *Techne iatrike* was more commonly known in the Middle Ages as *Tegni* or *Ars medica*) for third year students. These two morning hours were followed by the "ordinary practice of medicine" (Ad practicam ordinariam medicina), which also lasted for two hours and were based on the *De febribus* for freshmen, *De morbis particularibus ad capite usque ad cor* (Specific diseases between the head and the heart) for the sophomores, and *De morbis particularibus a corde infra* (Specific diseases below the heart) for third year students, all taken from Avicenna's "Canon" (Andrés 2010, 4).

After lunch, the students were engaged in the "extraordinary theoretical medicine" (*Ad theoricam extraordinariam medicina*) and the "extraordinary medical practice" (*Ad practicam extraordinariam medicina*). The former was based on the same texts of Avicenna, Hippocrates and Galen, but in the reverse order ("Tegni" for freshmen and "Canon" for the third year students respectively), while the latter – on the Book IV of Avicenna's "Canon" and Book IX of Rhazes'[7] "Almansor" (Andrés 2010, 5).

In fact, all three compendia ("Tegni", "Canon", and "Aphorisms") repeated the same theoretical principles. Students' training (and, hence, the requirements for candidates at the exam) consisted of memorization and repetition. Moreover, Avicenna's theory of liquids and temperatures, as well as his description of the diseases were based on the teachings of Galen, which, in turn, developed the ideas of Hippocrates. The advantage of Avicenna's texts was in the clarity of presentation and its systematization, making his "Canon" an ideal textbook (Andrés 2010, 6).

It should be noted that the surgery and anatomy (*Ad chirurgiam et anatomiam*) were mandatory subjects in University of Padua. They were read by the same professor who mainly referred to the "Anatomy of the Human Body" (*Anathomia corporis humani*) by Mondino de Luzzi (or Mundinus), written in beginning of the 14th century (Andrés 2010, 8). Only after famous Andreas Vesalius joined the university in 1537 (much later after Skaryna's defense) Mondino's texts were replaced by the more modern ones.

Indeed, it is not possible to mention all the texts that were commented by the professors during the classes. Handwritten, and from the late 15th century, printed legacy of medieval and Renaissance medicine contains hundreds of treatises, summaries, comments, *consilia* compilations – special cases of patients' consultations (Siraisi 2001, 37-62; 63-78). A future doctor should know a lot of them, and in addition, master the methods of conducting a scientific disputation.

Obviously, when it comes to the basic settings that a future doctor of Skaryna's time should know, the lessons about the four temperaments known from school seem quite vulgar because they represent only the top of the iceberg Avicenna – Galen – Hippocrates, which had formed the basis of natural philosophy from antiquity to the Renaissance.

In fact, the physiology of that time involved a comprehensive review of the human body, which started with the "natural": constitution, fluids (*humors*) and systems.[8] Body constitution (temperament) consisted of balance of body's characteristics: hot, humid, cold and dry. When all four qualities are balanced, the person is healthy. Thus, there was no absolute criterion of "correct" physique (such as normal body temperature 36.6°C nowadays); for some people the "proper" was the dominance of "hot", while for others – "cold". The cause of the disease was viewed as a body qualities' misbalance defined by a physician in each case based on the observation of the patient and his secretions. The task of the physician was to restore the balance. For this end, he prescribed a certain diet, medication or, for example, bloodletting, in order to clean the body from excessive amounts of a certain *humor*, or to add "hot" to the constitution.

Four fluids (*humors*) were considered central to the functioning of a human body: blood (the most important one), phlegm (all colorless or whitish secretions, most likely brain fluid), bile (red or yellow bile from the gallbladder) and black bile (spleen). It was their circulation that determined a complex balance in the human body.

The major organs and systems associated with them were identified in the human body. However, the followers of Aristotle and Galen disagreed on priority and understanding of these organs' functions. As it has already been noted, the works of Aristotle also formed the basis of medical education at the time, because the medicine was indivisible from natu-

ral philosophy and medical knowledge was considered in the philosophic context (Schmitt 1985, 1-15). According to Aristotle, the heart controlled the whole body, while Galen taught that the heart, brain and liver each managed a certain part of the body. In addition, the physiological principles of Galen actually included a separate circulation systems – venous (related to the liver's functioning) and arterial (linked with the heart's activity and controlled blood) and *spiritus* – the main criterion of the body's life).

Therefore, a physician was to determine the complex human condition according to his own observations – listening to the heart, studying excrements (dozens of shades were distinguished depending on a person's age, sex and status), color of the face, cheeks, tongue, nails, etc. Moreover, the most important quality of the medical profession was the ability to predict the desease's course and outcome. The presence of certain symptoms was compared with the calendar of the prognosis, their evolution and outcomes, while the doctor had to predict the course, timing and outcome of the disease. A university graduate, holder of the doctoral degree was given the right to teach throughout the entire Christian world in the name of the Catholic Church (Grendler 2002, 7). Thus, a medical scientist entered the high medical "society". He was not a practicing physician (patients often were treated by pharmacists, midwives, witches, and even hairdressers; in Padua, however, the latter was not as spread as it was in the rest of Europe), but namely a scientist. He belonged to the highest intellectual world, being involved into intensive research in medicine, but also mainly in logic, philosophy and theology.

Not surprisingly, in the Italian universities of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance teaching of logic and philosophy formed the basis of medical education, as evidenced not only by treatises of the distinguished scientists such as "Matching contradictions between medicine and philosophy" (*Conciliator differentiarum quae inter philosophos et medicos versantur*) by Pietro d'Abano (1472), but also by the statutes of universities in Florence, Bologna, Padua, or Pisa (Schmitt 1985, 4).

Dr. Skaryna should be considered in a broader context, which was summarised by Siraisi:

> … medieval and Renaissance learned physicians participated fully in the intellectual movements as well as the social and cultural environment of their age. They were scholastics when scholarsticism was the intellectual mode, and humanists when humanism represented up--to-date learning.‚(Siraisi 2001, 1-2).

One of the main requirements for a future doctor was not only medical knowledge – diagnostics and treatment, – but the ability to reason, to carry out the so-called disputations. Doctoral defense was also organised in the form of a disputation. The same *puncta*, which a candidate had received the day before his defense, were given to the scientific community to discuss. Thus, each of the attendees of the examination could ask the candidate to comment, challenge or reason certain aspect of the proposed topic. Such disputes could last for hours: the longer a candidate could argue, the worthier his defense was evaluated. While describing the defenses of that time, Ferrari stressed that they could sometimes continue for *twelve* hours. In fact, it was the evidences that provided me with an opportunity to ponder the exact time of the Skaryna's exam, as 10 pm, as it was previously thought, could not be an appropriate time to start examining disputations! As Ferarri admits, "those who could speak six to ten hours without getting tired and still could find the word were glorified. [Those were] amazing tournaments that could only be finished by night. Judges and participants of the battle left desolated and enthusiastic of themselves..." (Ferrari 1899, 29).

The third and the last step in the process of receiving a doctoral degree was *Privatum* (personal examination) and obtaining doctoral dignity signs (*Insignia*). That was a pro forma exam, as its outcomes had been determined at the previous stage. If the examiners had already recognised the candidate's satisfactory knowledge during the trial exam (*Tentativum*), the result of the *Privatum* was predetermined to be successful.

A reader should be reminded that in the time when Skaryna came to Padua for his defense, the city was exhausted by the military hostilities caused by the war of the League of Cambrai (1508 – 1516) in which Padua took part as a Venetian vassal. The war had directly affected the life of the university, as Paduan citizens used military failures of Venice to overthrough its rule. These troubles and restoration of the Venetian domination were marked not only by the outflow of students and teachers (for example, such distinguished scholars as Pietro Pomponazzi and Carlo Ruini left Padua for the University of Bologna), but even by executions of the most active participants of the uprising against Venice (Grendler 2002, 31). Teaching was suspended during the war and doctoral defenses were very rare. In this period the practice of ceremonial awards of doctoral dignity signs, which had previously been a separate step of the procedure, was considerably simplified.

In the previous century, the award of doctoral dignity signs had been very pompous. A description of these festivities can be found in many sources, such as F. Platter (Gaudin 1892, 99-100). As Ferrari describes:

> The candidate rode to the cathedral on an ornated horse with musicians. Then the professors and students came, and while the bells were ringing, the entire procession marched through the city. The candidate made a speech in Latin in the cathedral on a special dais before a huge crowd of spectators. Than he received dogtoral *insignia* from the bishop according to a special ritual: a medicine book, first closed (a symbol of knowledge it contains) and then open (symbolizing that the new doctor medicine will teach this knowledge to others); gold ring that symbolized his marriage with science; doctoral beret and "the kiss of peace". After the ceremony, a young doctor, surrounded by musicians, professors, students, representatives of the city administration, gave a feast with lots of food and dancing (Ferrari 1899, 32).

During the war, economic and political problems had led to the fact that this ceremony was merged with the third stage, *Privatum*, and became its logical consequence. Thus, at the beginning of the early 16th century and later the *Privatum*

exam and the award of doctoral dignity signs coincide. Hence, in this period the phrase *privatum examen et doctoratus* becomes a typical formulation in the "Acts of the doctoral defences of the University of Padua" (Forin 1969, IX).

However, the translation of *privatum examen* requires closer attention. In the Belarusian Soviet (and post-Soviet) Skaryniana this term is usually translated as "special" exam. This translation is inaccuatate as it impliase certain uniqueness of Skaryna's case. When Skaryna's Paduan documents were published in the Soviet period, the Belarusian scholars somehow did not pay attention to it. Similarly in the English translation for that matter, and that the English translation of Sadoŭski it is referred to as "private examination", which in fact means a personal examination (Sadoŭski 1969, 26)! In the Latin original privatum examen means "*individual, personal*" and *is found everywhere in the "Acts of the doctoral defences" as absolutely ordinary formulation for all doctoral candidates who "individually" appeared before the Sacred Board.*

On the other hand, although the translation of *privatum* as "special" is inaccurate, as it implies certain "uniqueness" of Skaryna's defence, some peculiarities in the Skaryna's Paduan records could be observed: Skaryna was presented already during the first meeting when requested for *gratia* as a poor candidate who had traveled thousands of miles. Below, in a special section focused on the defense's circumstances this fact will be addressed. As for now, we will focus to the question why despite all obstacles, including poverty, war, and distance, Skaryna was heading to Padua to obtain his doctoral degree in medicine?

DOCTORAL DEGREE IN PADUA

From the 15th century the Faculty Arts and Medicine of the University of Padua was famous throughout Europe as the best one of its kind. In this era, the majority of European universities had each its own specialisation – theology in Paris, law in Bologna, medicine – in Padua and later in Montpellier (Ferrari 1899, 12).

Even in such a "narrow" aspect as dissection the medieval Italian universities were ahead of their northern counterparts. Already in 1240 the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire Frederick II issued a decree on the need to include study of human anatomy into the course of medical education. Dissection for educational purposes and autopsy held in Italy were fully documented already in the end of the 13th – beginning of the 14th centuries. Initially, dissections of a human body were performed by a Professor before a small group of selected students. However, already prior to the beginning of the 15th century the university statutes of Padua, Florence and Bologna had contained a mandatory requirement the dissection sessions (called "public anatomy") must be attended by students (Grendler 2002, 329).

During the 15-17th centuries, the University of Padua's heyday enjoyed a growing prestige due to various factors. Unlike other Europe's oldest universities, such as Bologna, Paris, Oxford or Cambridge, the University of Padua was not established in accordance with a special order of the Pope or other ruler. It was founded rather spontaneously, as a result of students' meetings around the famous lecturers and lawyers. This created a *democratic* atmosphere of the studentship. The days were still remembered, when the students themselves adopted statutes, paid for their professors' work, selected deans (Bortolami 2007, 181—204). Moreover, despite the fact that the University of Padua was a Catholic one, specific religious restrictions were not imposed on its students, which particularly contributed to the penetration of the Renaissance ideas to the student and faculty environment.

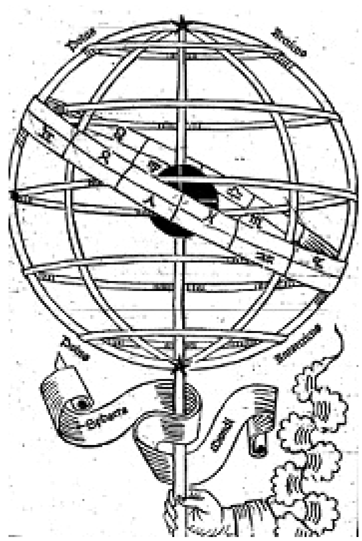
On the other hand, from its very foundation the University of Padua was characterized by an *international* character. As of 1331 at least eight student nations were represented at the University of Padua: *Teutonici, Boemi, Poloni et Ungari, Provinciales, Burgundionis, Anglici cum Scotis, Cathalani cum Hispanis, Ultramarini*, as well as ten other *natio Italici*. Moreover, this figure had been steadily growing, and by the beginning of the 15th century students born not in Padua and its environs represented more than 87% (Bortolami 2007, 202). Because of the hostilities in beginning of the 16th century these numbers fell. However, already between 1540 and 1609 6,493 students of the *Germanica* nation were matriculated in Padua, comparing to 3,090 at the Univesity of Bologna. Even in the early 17th century. An Englishman Thomas Coryat testified: "Padua has more international students than any other university in the Christian world" (Bortolami 2007, 202).

During the 15-16th centuries such distinguished persons as studied and taught Nicolaus Copernicus, Francesco della Rovere (later Pope Sixtus IV), Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, Leon Battista Alberti, Paolo Toscanelli, Francesco Guicciardini, Pietro Bembo, Tommaso Campanella, William Harvey, Gerolamo Cardano, Sperone Speroni, Galileo Galilei, Andreas Vesalius studied and taught at the University of Padua. The *ideas of humanism* were in the air at the the Faculty of Arts and Medicine at the University of Padua and resulted into a reference to the ancient primary sources and numerous translations, an exceptional interest in anatomy, clinical medicine and medical botany. Non surprisingly, it was the the University of Padua that has opened the first anatomical theater in 1594 (though this championship is also claimed by the University of Montpellier) and the first botanical garden in 1545 (teaching botany in Padua started in 1533) (Andrés 2010, 5). This brings to mind the publication documents by Florovskij, which demonstrate eventual presence of Skaryna in Prague performing the duty of the royal gardener (Florovskij 1946; 1988)!

Thus, Skaryna went to Padua, the most prestigious European university in the field of medicine, to obtain his doctoral degree, and this is the most important fact. After all, *a doctoral degree was not required to pursue medical practice, it was enough to have a magister degree* (and Skaryna had already obtained it, which is indicated twice in the Paduan documents). However, Skaryna considered it necessary to make all this way, literally and figuratively, in order to obtain the doctoral degree in medicine in Padua. It was no coincidence, since a doctoral degree was the crowning of the scientific career (Ferrari 1899, 30), and a doctoral degree from Padua had double value!

ARMILLARY SPHERE

For a long time Skaryna's phenomenon was viewed only in the context of his publishing and enlighment activities "for the sake of simple people". His medical education and the highest degree in medicine were not among the priorities of the Belarusian scholars. Meanwhile, it is the combination that allows us to put Skaryna's selfless work in the context of scientific and philosophical thought of the Renaissance epoch. The fact that Skaryna saw himself within this context can be confirmed at least by *the presence of armillary sphere on his portrait*! One should note, that the notion "sphaera mundi" often used by the Belarusian historians to indicate the tool depicted by Skaryna is not entirely correct. On his portrait Skaryna depicted a *sphaera armillaria* (armillary sphere, i.e. a sphere with a lot of mobile rings) also known as spherical astrolabe, a model of the celestial sphere around the Earth and simultaneously a tool for determining the coordinates in a starry sky. Its most "replicated" is the one by Johannes de Sacrobosco (perhaps 1195-1256) from his famous work *Tractatus de sphaera* (app. 1230), which was re-published on numerous occasions. For example, in Sacrobosco's publication of 1482 (Venice) the armillary sphere depicted as a cover sheet.



Joannes de Sacro Bosco, 1482. Sphaera mundi

The same picture, but as a second page (the first page after the titular one which depicts an astronomer just before the sphere of the sky) can be found in Sacrobosco's compilation published by Leopoldi Ducatus in Pavia in 1513 (Leupoldi Ducatus 1513, the first page after the title one).

Although armillary sphere had been known in antiquity – Ptolemy mentions it in his Almagest (Genuth, Sara Schechner 1998, 28—3), in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance it became not only a tool, but also a kind of symbol. This symbol incorporates scientific knowledge which is based and at the same time anticipated classical scienfic tradition, embodies God's inspiration which is sublimated in the canonical and concise artistic reflection (Fairey; Caradonna 2010). The armillary sphere can be found everywhere in the 15-16th centuries. It is both a scientific tool as well as a piece of art and an object of collecting, for instance, of the House of Medici or Federico da Montefeltro, the Duke of Urbino, whose *studiolo* of 1476 was renovated in New York's Metropolitan Museum (Raggio 1996, 3-35). It is found in the engravings, paintings, murals and tapestries of Albrecht Dürer, Sandro Botticelli, Giorgio Vasari, Justus van Ghent, Jan Brueghel the Elder, and others. It is quite natural that the armillary sphere as a symbol embodies the power of Knowledge, both celestial and human. The Renaissance intellectuals considered it a must-have tool and knew how to use it. Skaryna placed it on his engraving portrait – the Portrait of doctor Francysk Skaryna.

NOTES:

[1] Quoted from: Braha 1964, 13—4: Windakiewicz St., 1892. *Materiały do historii Polaków w Padwie. Archiwum do Dziejów Literatury i Oświaty w Polsce*. Tom VII. Kraków, s. 158; Šliapkin I. 1892. К биографии Франциска Скорины, *Журнал Министерства Народнаго Просвещения*, No.4. Санкт--Петербург, pp. 382—385.

[2] See: Dingley 1980; Halienčanka 2002; Daraškievič 1988; Podokšin 1981; Šamiakin 1990; Tumaš 1989.

[3] It should be noted that while studying the *Acta Graduum Academicorum ab anno 1501 – ad annum 1525*, one can find another simplified formula of *nemine penitus dissentiente* -- *in maiori parte*. Also, it should be stressed that the members of the *Sacro Collegio* were generally interested in doctoral defences because doctoral degrees fees represented significant bonus to their salaries (see Grendler 2002, 24 and 179—80; Forin 1969, 338—9).

[4] Jaŭhien Niemiroŭski in his work *Франциск Скорина: жизнь и деятельность белорусского просветителя* (Francysk Skaryna: life and activities of the Belarusian enlightener (Minsk 1990), within the context of Skaryna's studies in Cracow emphasized that at that time division started the new day started at the sunset (p. 188). He further admited that the exams on November 5 and 6 started at 5 pm and 10 pm which correspods to today's 10 am and 3 pm respectively (c. 202 i 204). At the same time, this observation of Niemiroŭski remained almost unnoticed by a wider scientific audience: "Yet it was quite late, because at 10 pm" – argued V.Tumaš. Niemiroŭski also believed that the sunset was at 5 pm, but the calculation shows that the sunset in Italy in November took place at 6 pm (according to Grendler 2002) which creates one hour difference in calculations.

[5] Except for V.Tumaš who interpreted *gratia* as "grace, merciful giving, merciful recognition" (Braha 1970, 52), however this remained unnoticed.

[6] Although some historians speak about twenty-four hours for preparation (See: Grendler 2002, 177).

[7] Muhammad ibn Zakariya al-Razi (latinized name Rhazes), author of famous medical compendium devoted to the ruler Mansur, known in medieval Europe as *Al-Mansuri*.

[8] This short description of human physiology is based on a synopsis from: Grendler (2002, 314-328) and Siraisi (1990).

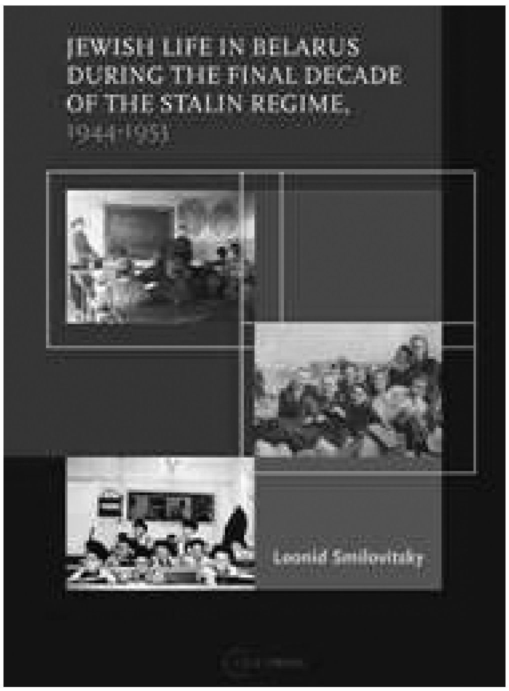
Author: *Volha Shutava,* PhD. From 1995 to 2009 – Associate Professor, Belarusian State University. Currently lives in France, independent researcher and writer.

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NEW BOOKS

LEONID SMILOVITSKY: JEWISH LIFE IN BELARUS: THE FINAL DECADE OF THE STALIN REGIME (1944-53)

(CENTRAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014)



Many prominent world-known Jews have been natives of Belarus. In many cases they achieved prominence in the areas ranging from politics and business to science and fine arts elsewhere but their child memories or family stories are linked with this European country. For many centuries Jews have formed an inalienable and important part of the Belarus' society with its own culture and traditions. A new book by a Belarus-born Israeli scholar Leonid Smilovitsky Jewish Life in Belarus: the Final Decade of the Stalin Regime (1944-53) *recently published by Central European University Press provides an in-depth description of this community's life during the period that followed the horrors of the Holocaust in which approximately 80% of the Belarusian Jewry was annihilated. The* Belarusian Review *has asked the author about his new book.*

Belarusian Review: *What is the role of Jews in the history of Belarus? What and who made Belarusian Jews famous?*

Leonid Smilovitsky: The recorded history of Belarusian Jews goes back seven hundred years. They were first mentioned in records relating to the fourteenth century. In the following centuries Jews enjoyed religious autonomy. They could elect their rabbis, conduct legal proceedings, observe their religious traditions, and educate their children at their own educational institutions. These rights were all retained after the Partition of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century, when Belarus became a part of the Russian Empire. Almost all the major movements in the history of East European Jewry – whether Hasidism or its opponents, the Misnagdim, the Haskala movement, the Bund, or Zionism – were related in some way to Belarus, so the Jews of Belarus could be fairly described as a uniquely vibrant community. They had their own outstanding leaders, eminent rabbis, prominent scientists, outstanding artists, and well-known literary and cultural personages who made a remarkable contribution to the history of Belarus, Poland, Lithuania, and Russia, as well as to the history of Palestine.

BR: *To what extent are foreign readers familiar with the themes of Jewish life in Belarus?*

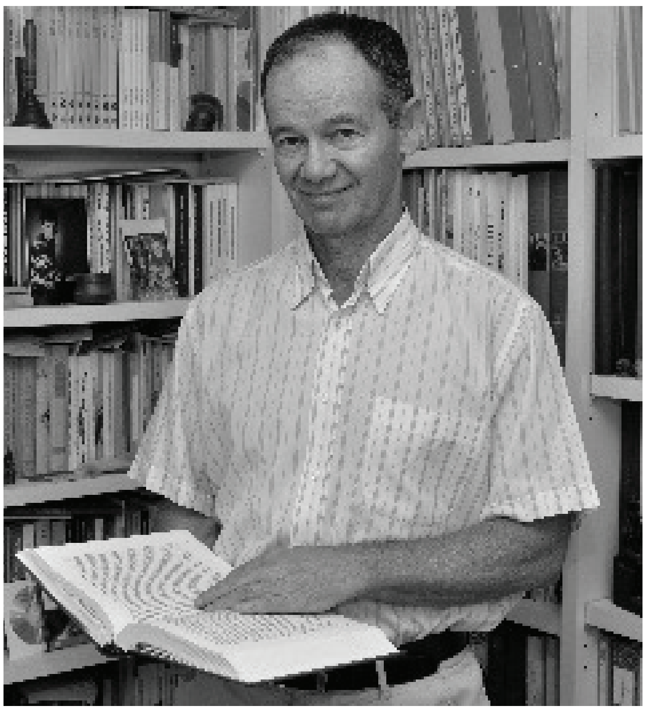
LS: There are almost no publications on the practice of Judaism in Belarus. The few books published in Belarus in the 1960s can hardly be considered unbiased, as they portray Judaism in a distorted manner – as an ideological doctrine aimed at diverting Soviet Jews from the supreme mission of strengthening communist society. A number of studies have been conducted that focus on the prewar period, among which are major works by Mordechai Altshuler, Abraham Greenbaum, Elissa Bemporad, David E. Fishman, Shaul Stampfer, Aron Skir, Albert Kaganovitch and Arkadi Zeltser. Considerably less study has been made on the postwar years. Major works focusing on this period are by Ben-Zion Goldberg, Joshua Rothenberg, Yaacov Ro'i, Abraham Greenbaum, and Mordechai Altshuler. All Western scholars are unanimous in admitting that the Soviet sources to which they had to confine themselves were few, not entirely trustworthy and excessively ideological. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, synagogues began to open and communities could register freely, but the older generation of Jews had all but passed away. I made a considerable effort to track down observant Jews and persuade them to share their reminiscences with me. The present work is one of the first attempts to study Jewish life in Belarus during the last decade of Stalin's rule.

BR: *Who and what inspired you to write this book?*

LS: The idea of this book was conceived in the early 1990s, but it was a long time in writing. It is likely that it would not have come into being at all had I not emigrated from Belarus to make my home in Israel, where I was exposed for the first time to the world of Jewish tradition and community life, which had more or less disappeared in the Soviet Union in the postwar period.

I was born in Minsk, the capital of Belarus, ten years after the end of WWII and was not familiar with the horror of the Holocaust that had annihilated almost half of world Jewry. But in my genetic memory it would seem that live shoots of this tragedy were still sensitive, and in the ditches and pits of Belarus lay the remnants of relatives, close and less close, who were still a part of me. My grandfather, Isroel Aharon Chechick, who lived in a *shtetl* near Rechitsa, in the province of

Gomel, was a mild man who never opposed the authorities nor said a word against them. Throughout his life he was an observant Jew, keeping the *mitzvot* and studying the Torah. In his younger years grandfather had been a *melamed,* but when *heders* were restricted and finally closed, he chose employment where he would not be obliged to desecrate the holiness of Shabbat. I remember the stories he told me from the Bible which I absorbed as fairytales. It is hard to imagine what his reaction might have been to the book you have before you on the Jews of Belarus, knowing that it had been written by his grandson. Jewish life in Belarus after the war was an inaccessible theme.



Professor Leonid Smilovitsky

BR: *What was the Jewish community in Belarus like in those days?*

LS: During the Soviet–German War, Jewish life in Belarus came to a complete halt. Only a small part of the community managed to get away to the Central Asian Republics, to Kazakhstan, or to Siberia at the very beginning of the war. There they joined Jews from Poland, Bessarabia, and the Baltic countries who had been exiled to these areas. They had to rent premises to pray in and they faced extreme hardship in trying to live in accordance with *halakha*. Belarus, after losing hundreds of thousands of Jews, was a major site of the Holocaust of European Jewry, the scale of which still needs further investigation. Out of nearly a million Jews who found themselves in the territory of the republic at the beginning of the war, only a few survived, primarily those drafted into the Red Army or evacuated in the very first days after the German invasion. A handful survived in the occupied territories due to their personal heroism, having escaped from ghettos and joined partisan groups. After the liberation of the republic, Jewish families started returning from the areas of evacuation while their fathers and elder sons were still fighting at the front. Jewish specialists were sent to Belarus from the Russian Federation and other Soviet republics to participate in the work of rehabilitation. There was a glimmer of hope that the Jewish problem was finally going to be solved.

BR: *Why does the book cover only the first postwar decade?*

LS: As I mentioned before, Jewish life in Belarus after the war was an inaccessible subject – officially regarded as being completely non-existent – and in the ideological atmosphere of the time research into the subject was impossible. Jewish community life had been wiped out by the Nazis, and its unreasonable attempt to come back to life was given short shrift by the communists For more than half a century the truth about Jewish life during this period was sealed in archives to which researchers had no access. The Jews of Belarus preferred to keep silent rather than expose themselves to the spleen of the authorities. Western scholars, having no access to the archives, had to confine themselves to official materials available from Soviet sources, such as publications on history, politics, law, scientific research, legislative acts related to religious and ethnic matters, periodicals, as well as indirect evidence derived from memoirs of contemporaries, who participated in or witnessed particular events. In recent years, the corpus of sources on the subject has expanded, and many archival materials are now available, which, combined with evidence collected from contemporaries, makes it possible for the first time to relate the authentic history of Belarusian Jewry under the communist regime.

BR: *What specific issues have received particular attention in your book?*

LS: The present study examines Soviet policy toward the Jews, specifically during the years following WWII, when Jewish communities were struggling to establish synagogues, legalize *shtiebels* and perpetuate the memory of Holocaust victims. It portrays the continuous and unrelenting efforts by these communities to maintain their Jewish identity and their religious traditions (including *brit mila*, *kashrut,* baking Passover *matzot*, burying the dead in accordance with the *halakha*, and maintaining Jewish cemeteries in proper order). An analysis is presented of the financial status of Jewish communities. The research describes the religious leadership and gives a social profile of religious communities, as well as portraying attitudes prevalent in respect of events in Palestine and the establishment of the State of Israel. Special emphasis is put on the issue of publishing Jewish literature, the significance of the Jewish holidays, and the role of world Jewry and its attitude toward the Jewish communities of Belarus. Another issue receiving detailed consideration is the attempts made by the Soviet regime to control Jewish religious life.

BR : *Did the attitude of the Soviet state towards Jews change after Stalin's death in 1953?*

LS: Following Stalin's death in March 1953, a new political situation in the Soviet Union, known as "The Thaw" evolved. Thousands of prisoners were released from camps, among whom were many veteran Zionists. Contacts with Jews abroad began to develop, and people began to resume exchanging letters with relatives from other countries including

Israel. Bans on Yiddish cultural activities were lifted, and the public could again attend concerts in Yiddish with singers, musical groups, pop artists, as well as cultural activities such as literary evenings in Yiddish. People started socializing more openly.

However, state policy toward the Jewish religion and its adherents had not changed in essence. The authorities were still convinced that religious communities would turn into centers of Jewish nationalism and Zionism, attract malcontents and become channels for supplying information to the enemies of the Soviet Union. Khrushchev manifested undisguised hostility to dissent. Taking full advantage of its monopoly of power, its total control of the media and the instruments of economic and social pressure, the regime tightened its grip on practicing Jews. Whenever a question arose from abroad as to the abnormal situation of Jewish life in the USSR, the authorities would reply that the Soviet Constitution prohibited any discrimination against its citizens and protected the rights of its Jewish citizens together with those all other Soviet citizens. This attitude indicated that nothing had really changed and that in terms of the future there was still no hope for Soviet Jewry.

BR: *What conclusions did you come to? Did the Soviet regime achieve its goals of assimilatory policies towards Jews?*

LS: The history of Belarusian Jewish life is remarkable. Jews suffered in full measure from the Soviet policies, being accused of nihilism, Jewish nationalism, and Zionism, exerting pernicious influence on the young and opposing assimilation. And yet the regime did not succeed in annihilating Judaism. The anti-religious policy pursued by the regime showed the impossibility of the entire idea of recasting people and society against their will.

Jews of Belarus played a very active role in the restoration and reconstruction of the national economy and cultural life of the republic after WWII, as the regime took advantage of their experience, knowledge, and talent for organization. However, the authorities related to the Jews only as Soviet citizens, with no national identity of their own, but rather in terms of the Soviet concept of internationalism, that is to say, that all people have equal rights. The contribution and merits of Jews were not recognized as those of the Jewish people as such; Jewish schools were not opened; the Yiddish theater remained closed, and Jewish newspapers and books were not published. Jewish national organizations, associations, and clubs were not allowed to come into being and for the younger generation of Jews even the Yiddish language became unknown. State anti-Semitism directed from above was complemented and strengthened by grassroots anti-Semitism still extant among much of the population, though this was indeed nothing new. Nonetheless, Jews of Belarus never openly opposed the regime. Their protest remained silent until the beginning of the 1970s, when the Dissident Movement took shape and included a good number of Jewish young people in its ranks. However, there is no real evidence that there was an independent Jewish protest movement in Belarus separate from the general dissident activities in the USSR. Today Belarusian Jewry is small in number, but more than half a century after Stalin's death, we see a Jewish revival and a growing interest in Jewish history and tradition among the small number of Jews still living in the country.

EXPERTS ABOUT THE BOOK

"Jews in Belarus are part of modern Belarusian history. This authoritative monograph deals with a very short time segment of Jewish life in what was called Soviet Belarus and it is complimentary to the author for how much of original material he was able to find and retrieve after the destructive years of WWII. Hopefully, however, that this publication will serve as a reminder-introduction to a study of Jews on the entire Belarusian territory where they interacted with the Belarusian population for many centuries."

Vitaŭt Kipiel (Belarusan Institute of Arts and Sciences, USA)

"Leonid Smilovitsky has made good use of his rare access to Belarusian archives, including those of the secret police, and has written a fine-grained, detailed history of Belarusian Jewry in the tumultuous decade after WWII. The reader gains a palpable sense of Soviet realities and Jewish courage, as Jews tried to reconstruct their lives, including the practice of Judaism, in the post-war era. Our impressions of that time will have to be revised in view of the fascinating evidence that Smilovitsky has brought together."

Zvi Gitelman (Preston R. Tisch Professor of Judaic Studies, University of Michigan, USA)

"Belarus was devastated by the Nazi occupation. At least a quarter of its population perished in these years, including nearly 90 per cent of the Jewish population of the area. Most of the Jews who survived did so by flight into the interior of the Soviet Union and many returned after the war, so that in the years until 1953 there were nearly 200,000 Jews in the Belarusian Soviet Republic. They were largely terrorised by their wartime experiences and the official anti-Semitism of the Stalin's last years. However, some Jewish life did continue as it is demonstrated by this detailed and comprehensive study. It is essential reading for all those interested in the Holocaust and its aftermath in Belarus and in the Soviet Union as a whole."

Antony Polonsky (Albert Abramson Professor of Holocaust Studies at Brandeis University and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, USA)

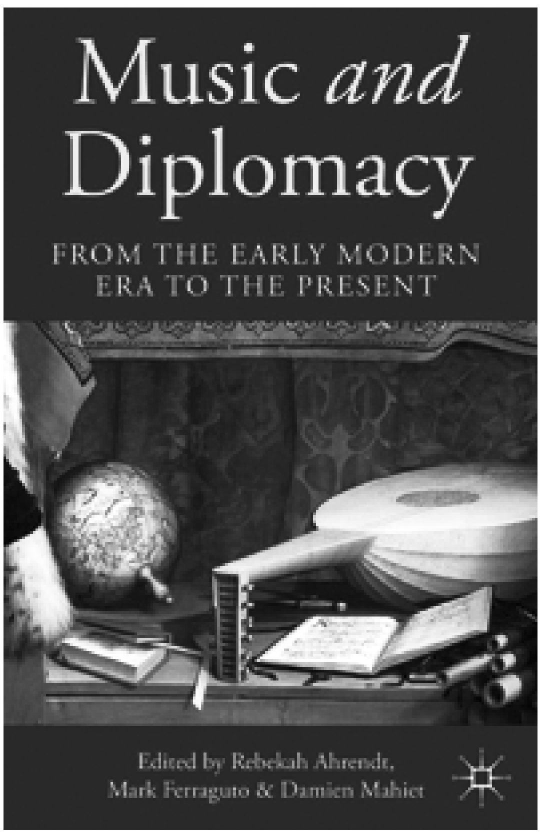
"The struggles of Belarusian Jews in the first years after WWII to maintain Jewish religion and culture were stubborn and often heroic, but they were rarely successful and almost never documented. In this book, Leonid Smilovitsky painstakingly reconstructed a lost chapter of modern Jewish history. The contents describe the day to day courage of 'ordinary Jews' living in conditions of almost hopeless adversity and are a testimony to the power of the human spirit."

Shaul Stampfer (Sandrow Professor of Soviet and Eastern European Jewish History, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel)

REBEKAH AHRENDT ET AL. (EDS.): MUSIC AND DIPLOMACY FROM THE EARLY MODERN ERA TO THE PRESENT

(PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, 2014)

The new book, Music and Diplomacy from the Early Modern Era to the Present *(Palgrave Macmillan, 2014) edited by* Rebekah Ahrendt, Mark Ferraguto, Damien Mahiet *is a joint effort of sixteen international scholars with backgrounds in diverse fields including musicology, ethnomusicology, political science, and cultural history. The eighth chapter is entitled "*Music from the Embassy to the Underground in a Post-Soviet Belarus*". The author of this chapter, Dr.* Maria Paula Survilla *(Executive Director of the Center for Belarusian Studies and Professor of Music at Wartburg College, USA), describes the framework of the chapter to the readers of the* Belarusian Review.



Maria Paula Survilla: "Belarusian contemporary music has been associated with social and political energies since the 1980s when rock and parallel popular genres participated in the complex energies that led to *adradžeńnie*, (renaissance or post-Soviet rebirth 1991-1994). This short period of self-exploration and reinvention contrasts significantly with the subsequent repressive and isolationist conditions that have defined Belarusian experience since the beginning of the Lukashenka regime (1994-present).

This chapter considers the intersection between music and diplomacy in two divergent political and cultural spaces. In the first (*adradžeńnie*), a climate of cautious optimism and of expectation towards democracy, as anticipated by the West as well as by Belarusians themselves, offers an opportunity to consider the more pronounced role of the diplomat. Interviews with Ambassador David Swartz, the first American Ambassador to a post-Soviet Belarus, as well as long-term research with musicians active during *adradžeńnie*, will serve to inform considerations of the confluence between music and diplomatic mediation in a more receptive political climate.

The second cultural space demands a shift in theoretical inquiry since the potential for direct diplomatic mediation is much redefined as a result of the nature of the Lukashenka regime and increasing restrictions for those traditionally engaged in diplomatic work. Here, the mediation and the development of diplomacy cannot take place within traditional and ritualized political mechanisms, but rather must exist through the conscious and implied placement of music and musicians in the role of political mediators".

BELARUSIAN LANGUAGE SUMMER INSTITUTE

Dr. Maria Paula Survilla, Executive Director of the Center for Belarusian Studies at Southwestern College (Winfield, KS) invites undergraduate and graduate students to participate in the Center's 3rd International Summer School of Belarusian Studies from July 3-31, 2015.

The program, co-sponsored by the Belarusian Historical Society (Bialystok, Poland), will be held at the Belarusian Cultural Center and Belarusian Lyceum in the town of Hajnówka, located in the Podlasie region of northeastern Poland, an area of great natural beauty and home to Poland's large ethnic Belarusian population—an ideal setting for the study of Belarusian language, history, society, and culture, as well as for the study of a broad range of issues relating to cultural diversity and minorities policies in the EU. Ambassador (retired) David H. Swartz will serve as the summer school's Program Director. Amb. Swartz was the first U.S. ambassador to Belarus. His career also included service as Dean of the School of Language Studies at the U. S. Department of State.

Coursework will include intensive Belarusian language instruction (beginning and intermediate levels and individual advanced-level tutorials) and lectures in English and Belarusian on Belarusian history, literature, contemporary politics and society.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MARCH 1, 2015.

PROGRAM INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM:

http://belarusiancenter.org/?page_id=455

BELARUSIAN REVIEW WORKING PAPERS

On October 16, 2014, the Belarusian Review and The_Point Journal launched a series of BR Working Papers focused on various areas of Belarusian studies within a wider regional perspective: political and economic situation, foreign and domestic policies, culture and history, identity issues and interethnic relations, etc.

The BR Working Paper #1 authored by our contributing editor Andrzej Tichomirow is entitled "Polish National Minority in Belarus as a Research Problem".

"Belarus-EU Relations: Ad Hoc Actions vs. Predeveloped Strategy"' by the Belarusian Review editor-in-chief Dr. Kiryl Kascian was released as the BR Working Paper #2 on November 4, 2014.

"Aggressive Alternatives: Assessing Cooperation in the post-Soviet Area" is the title of the BR Working Paper #3. It has been prepared by our contributing editor David Erkomaishvili and was released on January 5, 2015.

Brief versions of these three BR Working Papers have been published in this issue of our journal.

The BR Working Papers can be downloaded from our website in PDF format. We would appreciate feedbacks and comments from our readers. Belarusian Review and The_Point Journal are open to new ideas and cooperation with new authors.

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